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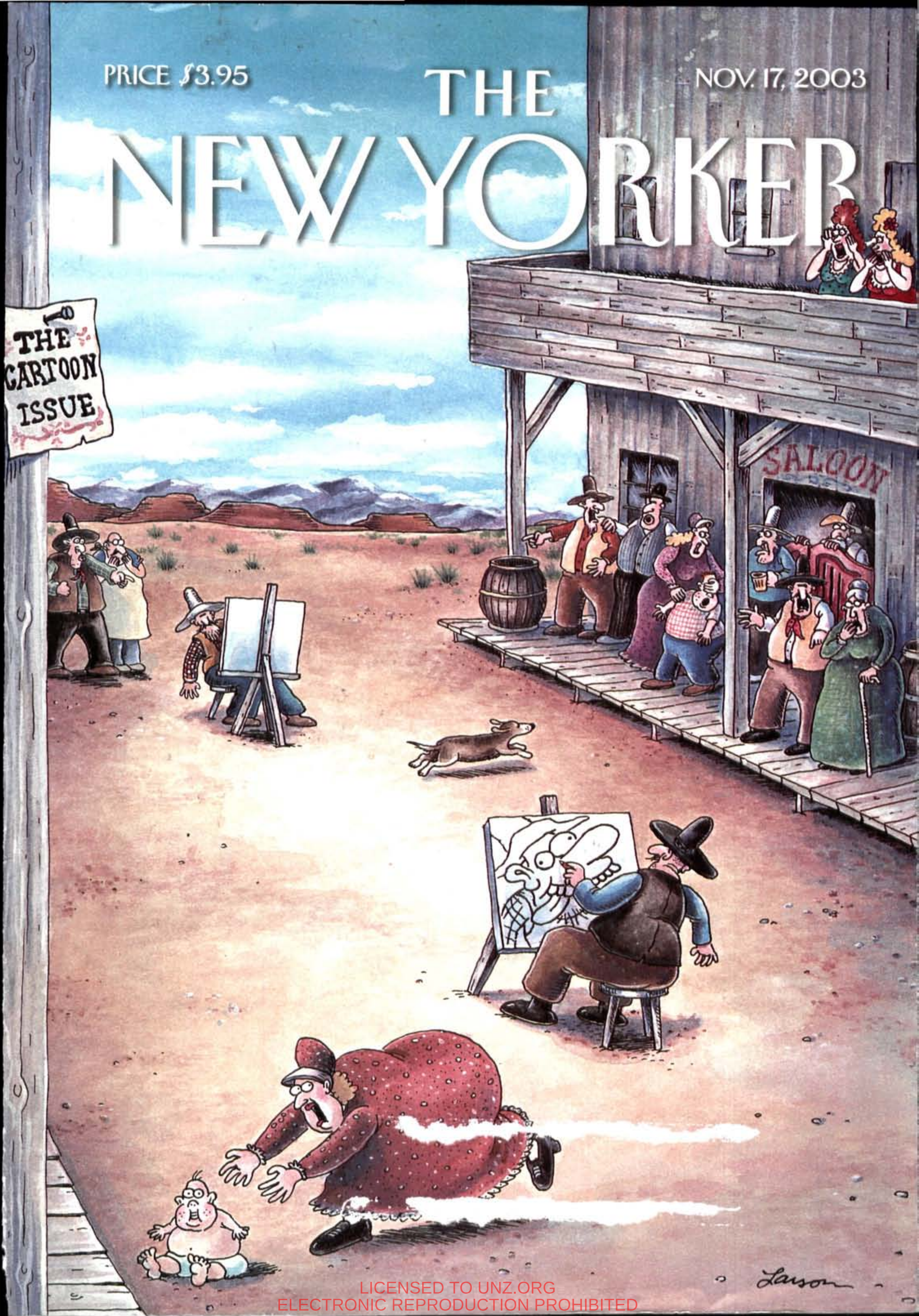
NOV. 17, 2003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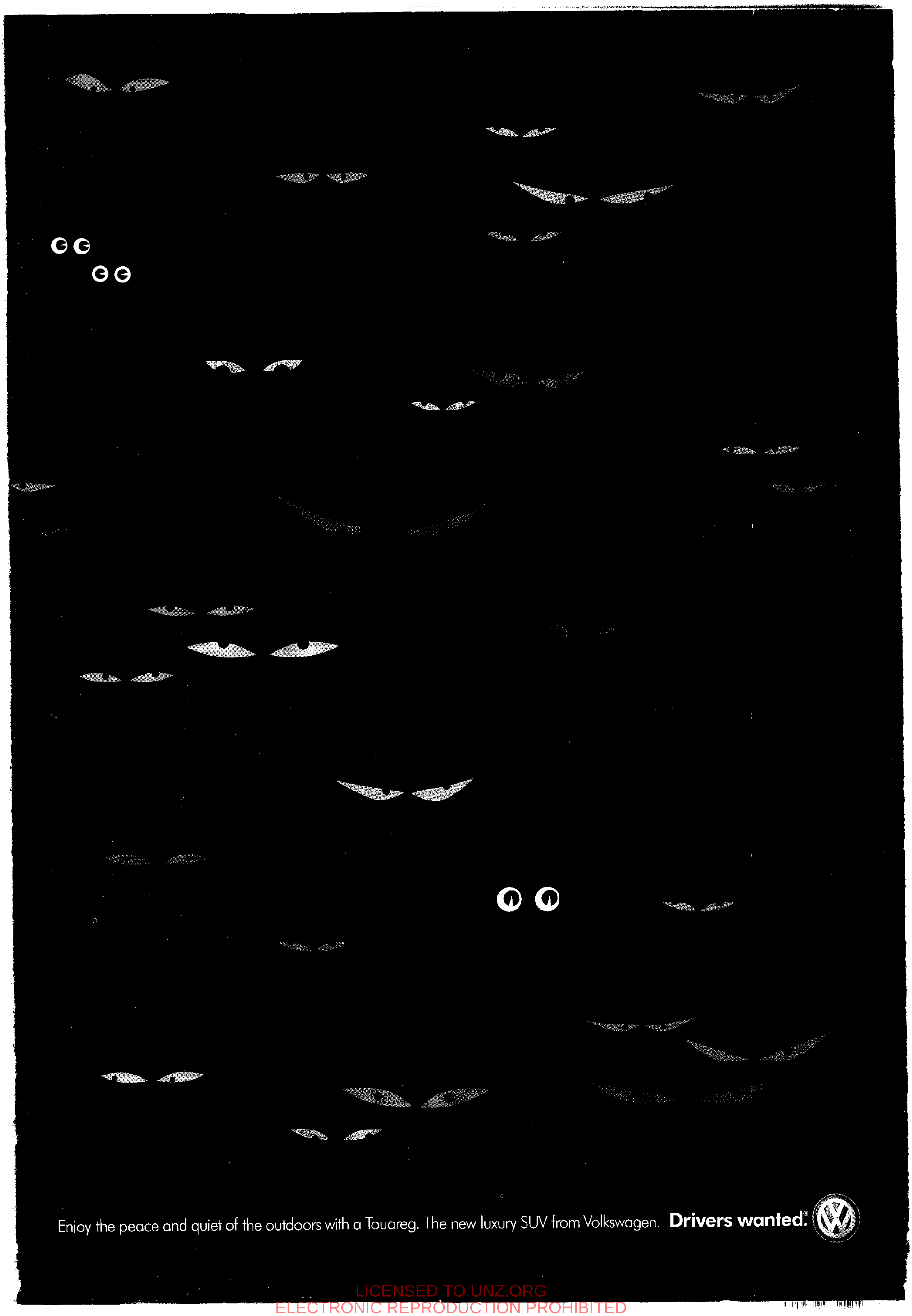
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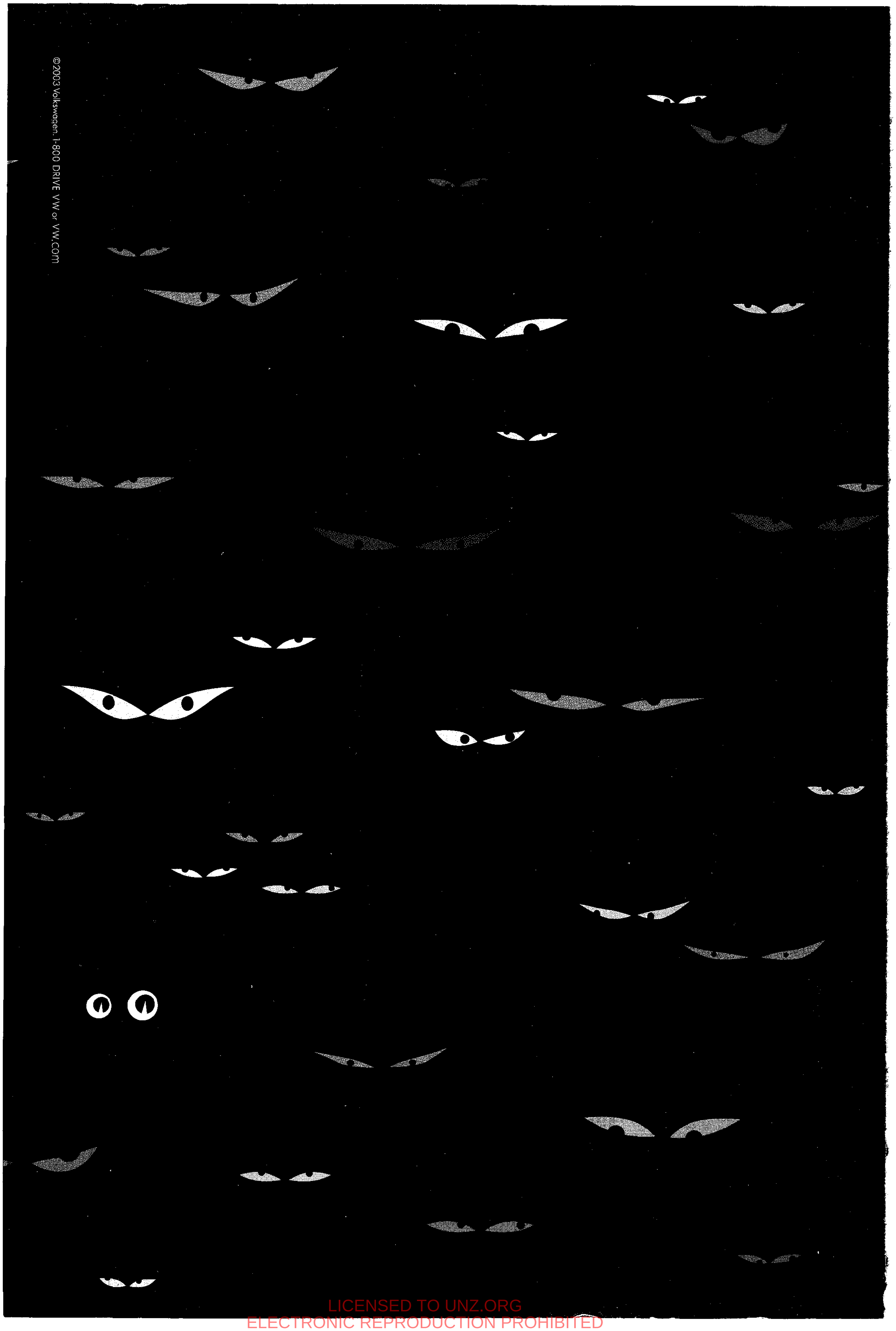
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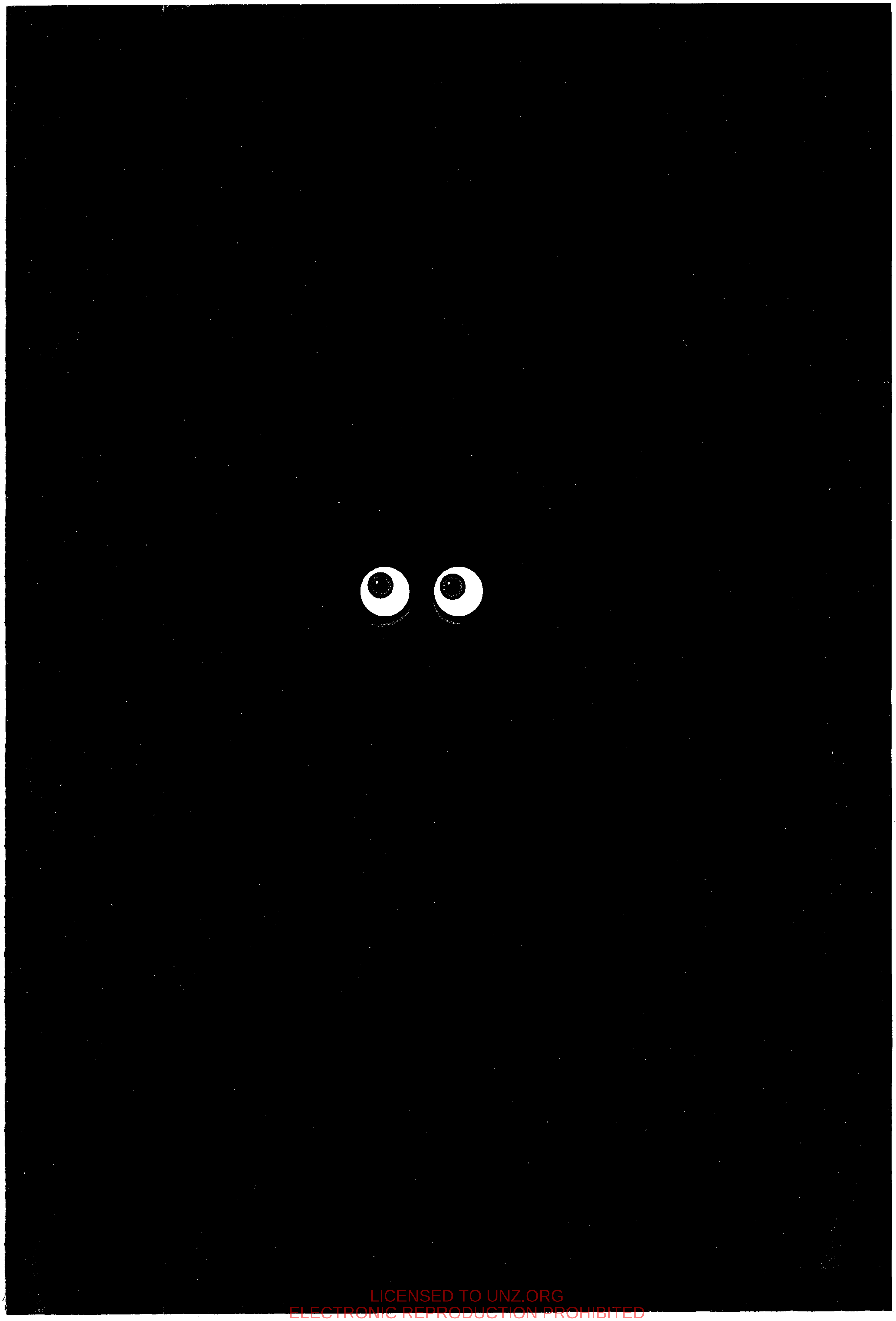

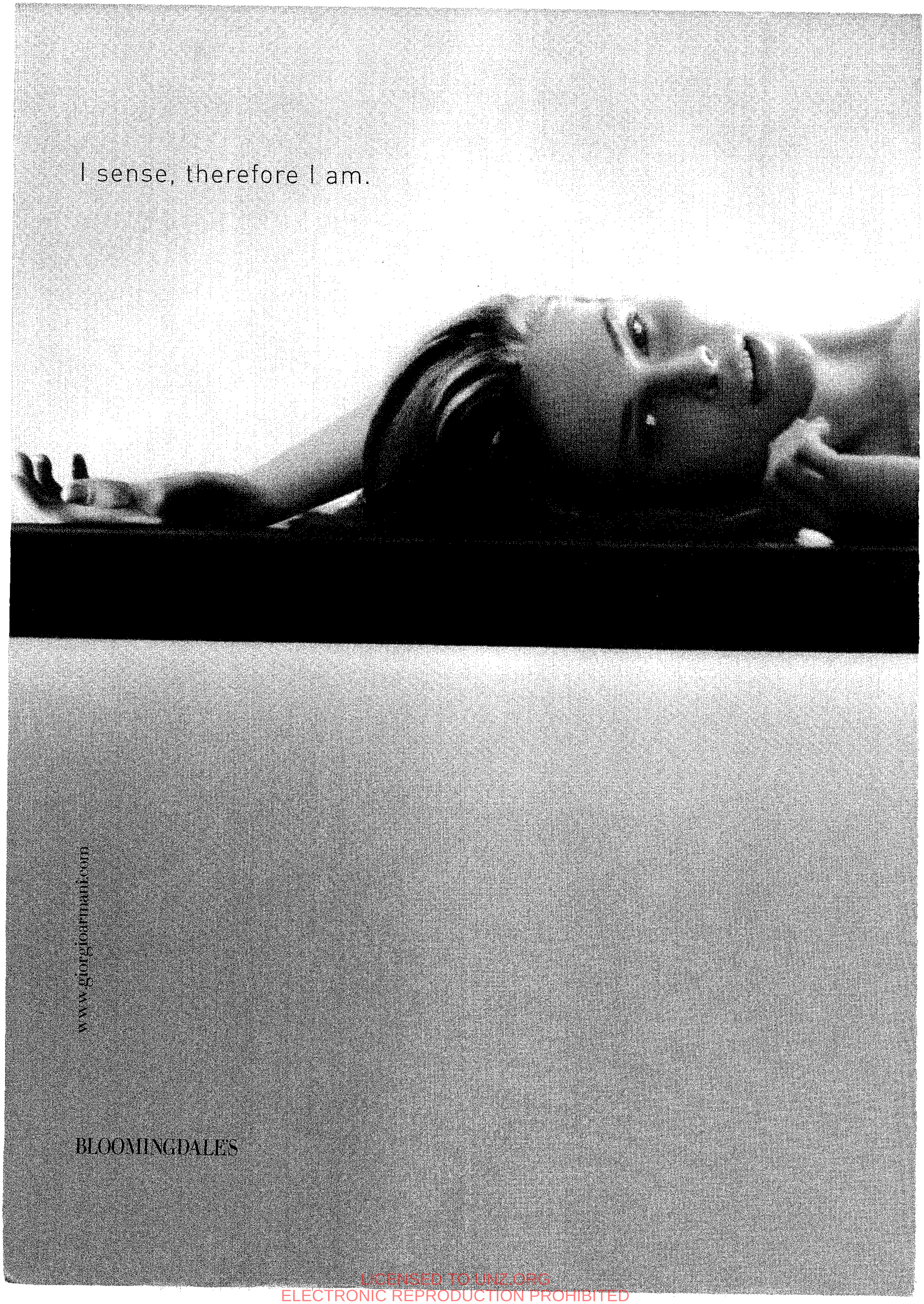
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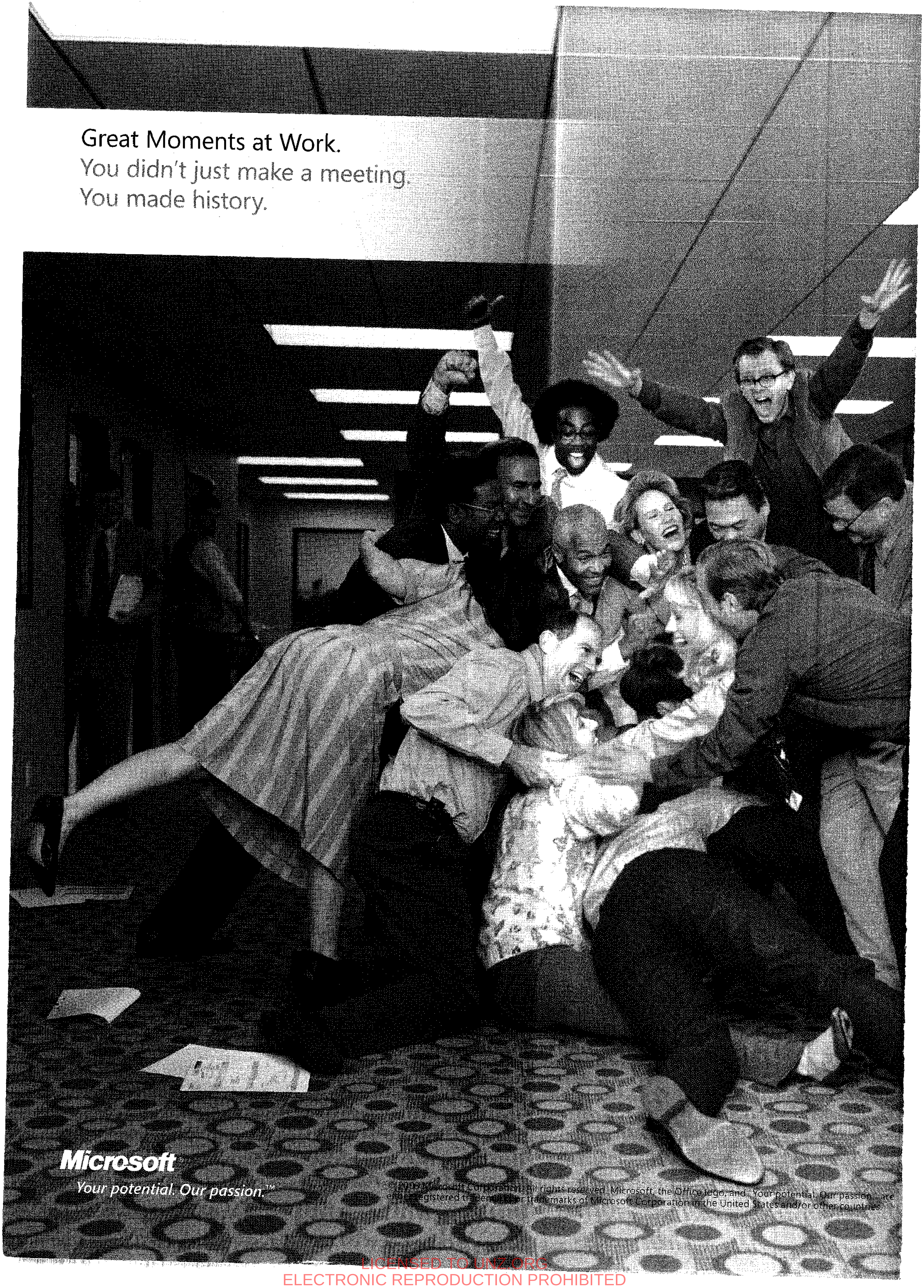
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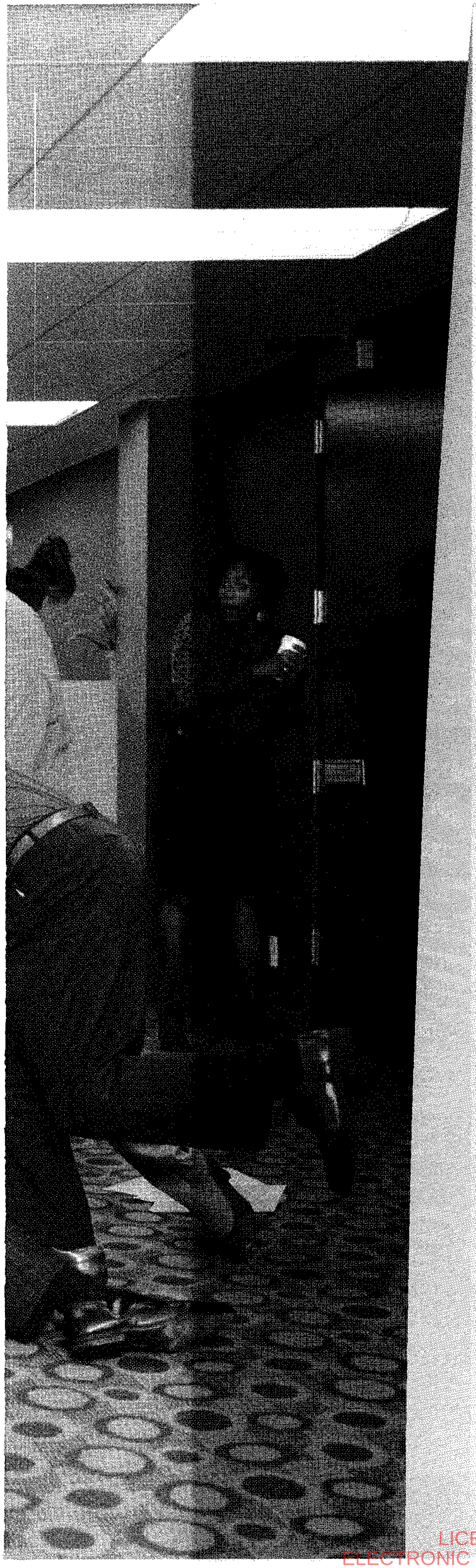

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Or, in our own Polish words, "his remarks earned him the *na zdrowie* of everyone."

Everyone, we must raise our glasses and shout *na zdrowie* to the rigorous endeavors of people, events, ah-has, institutions, dates, achievements and — in Secretariat's case — animals worthy of our embrace and acknowledgement.

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Na zdrowie!

It is, after all, only fair. We need only to recall what Longfellow wrote, as only Longfellow could write, in *The Ladder of Saint Augustine*: "The heights by great men reached and kept / Were not attained by sudden flight, / But they, while their companions slept, / Were toiling upward in the night."

Or in other words, as Noel Coward once boasted, as only Noel Coward could boast, "Success took me to her bosom like a maternal boa constrictor."

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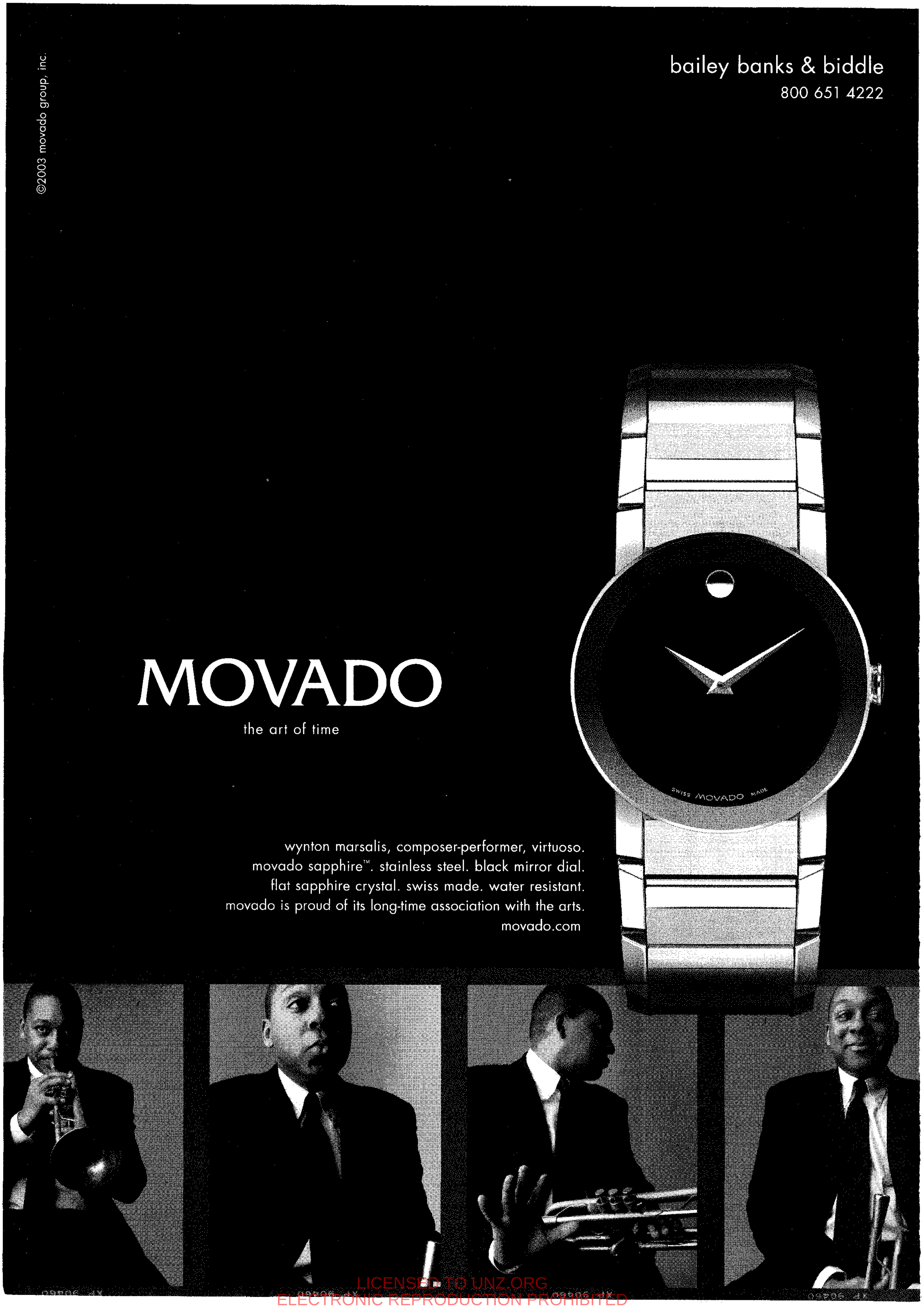

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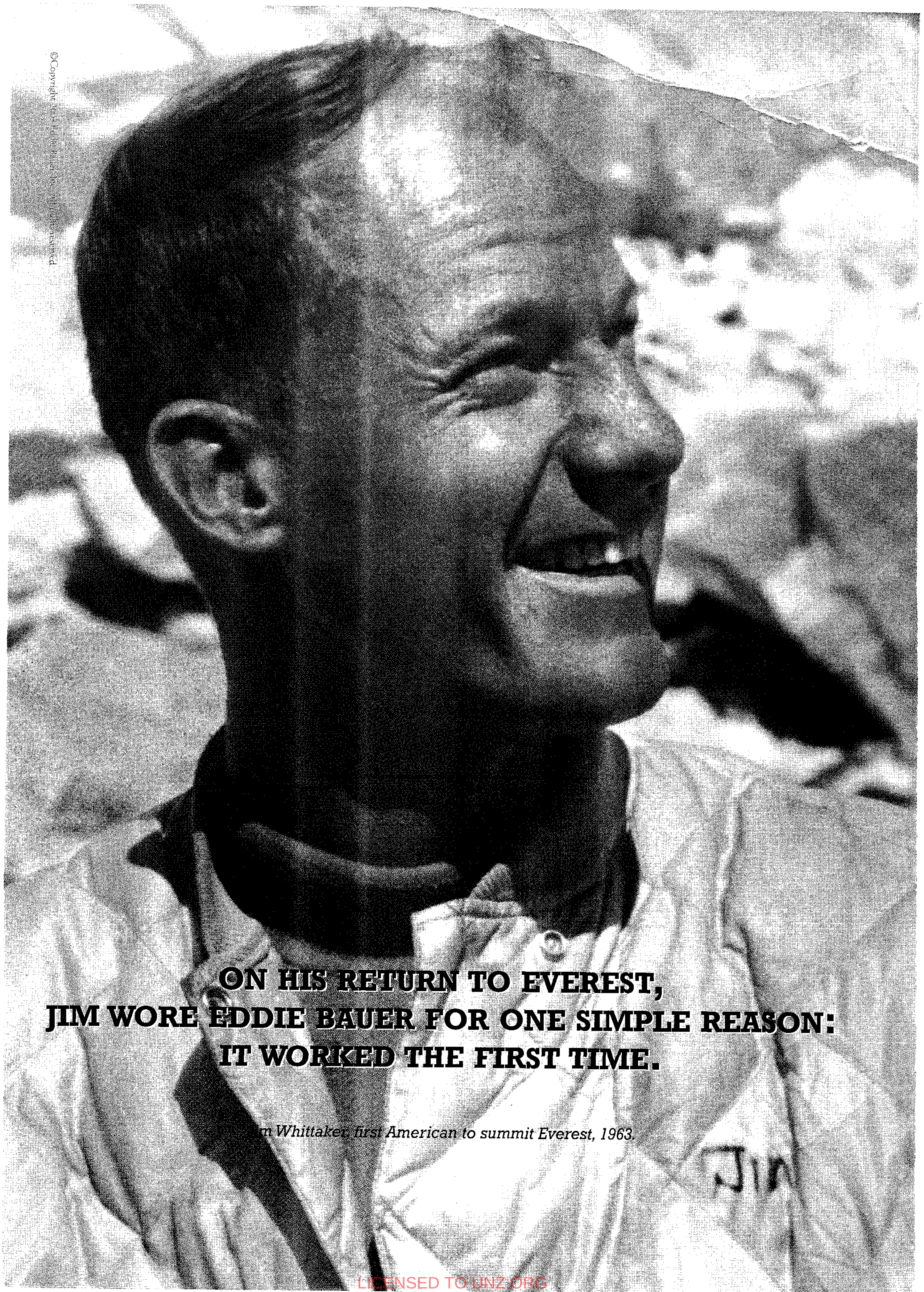
ON HIS RETURN TO EVEREST,
JIM WORE EDDIE BAUER FOR ONE SIMPLE REASON:
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Jim Whittaker, first American to summit Everest, 1963.

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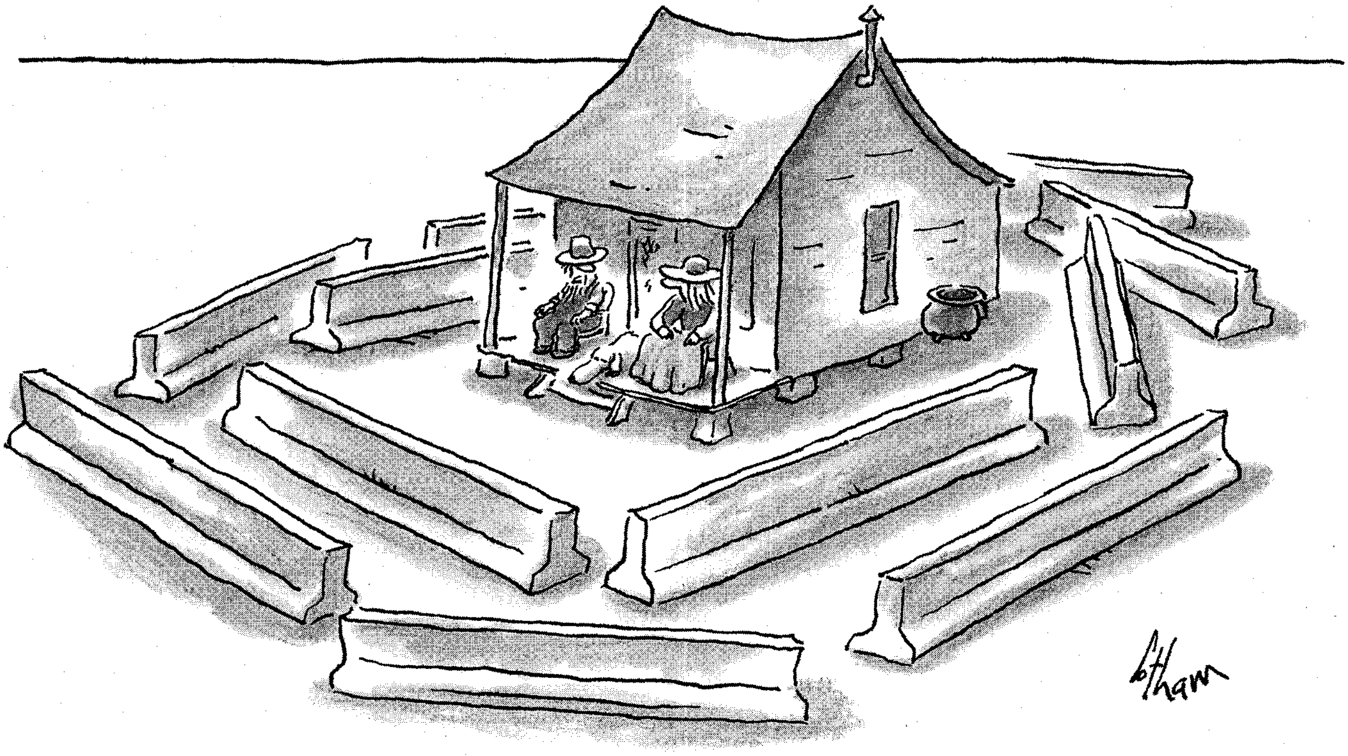

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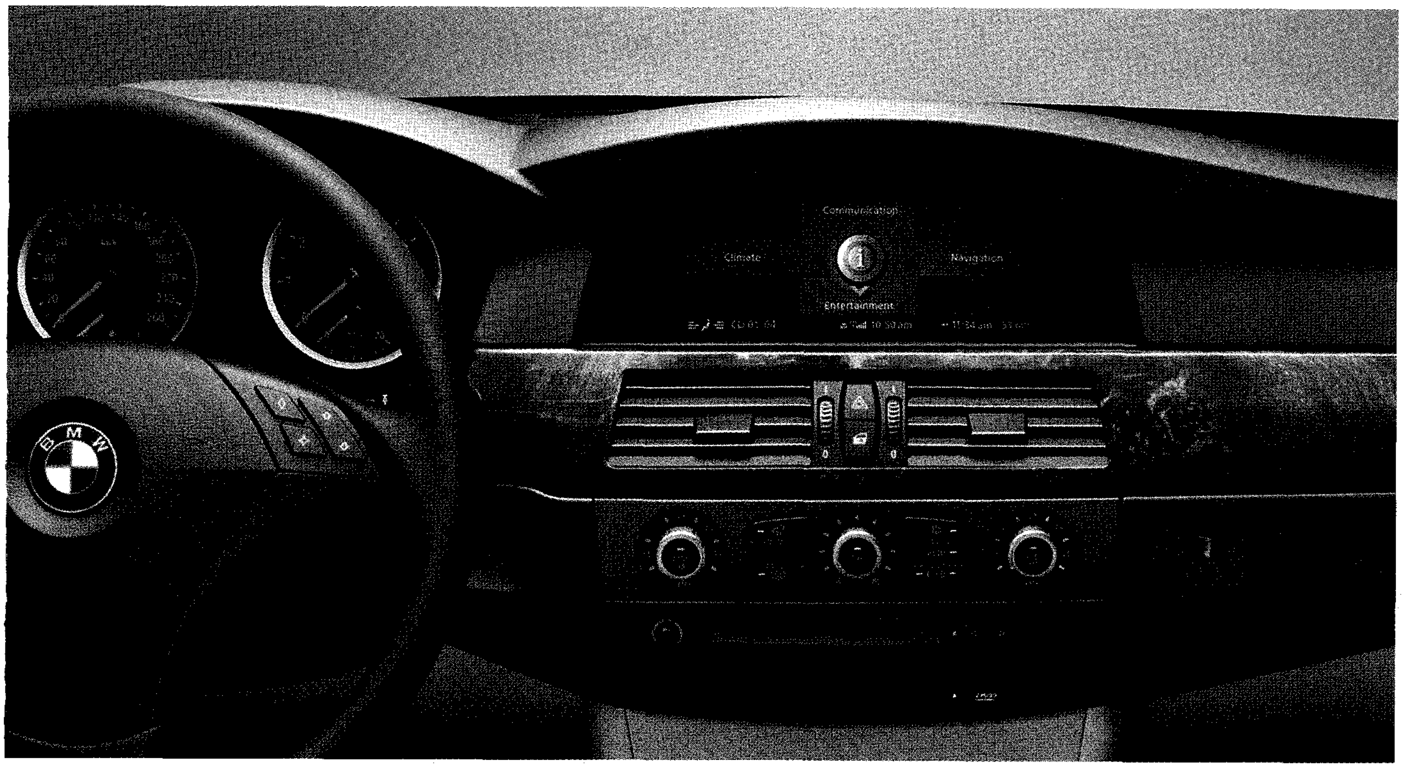

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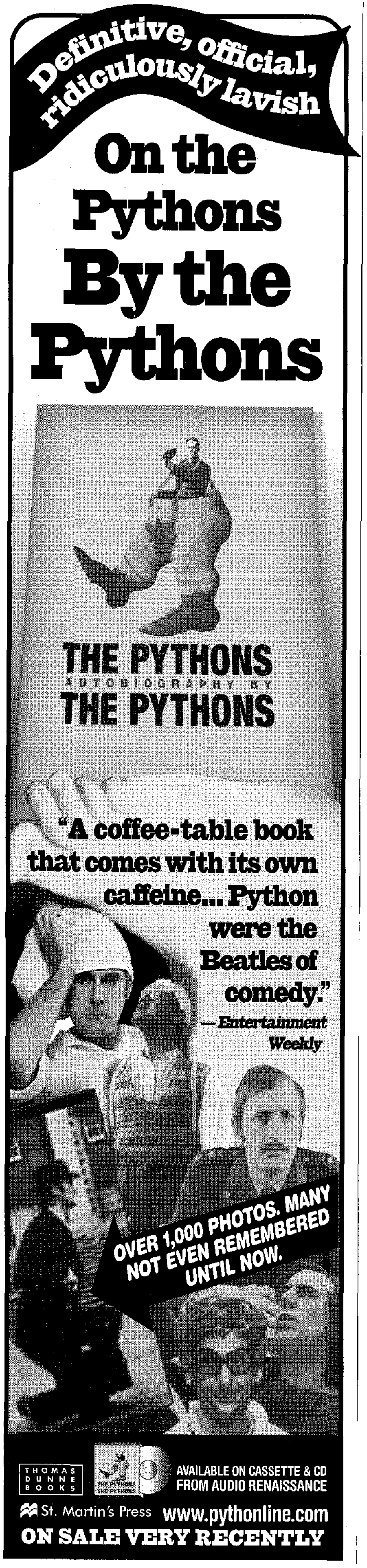
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CONTRIBUTORS

Peter J. Boyer ("General Clark's Battles," p. 70) is a staff writer. His piece about General Tommy Franks and the second Gulf War, "The New War Machine," appeared in the magazine in June.

Susan Orlean ("Animal Action," p. 92) has published a dog-food cookbook, "Throw Me a Bone," written under her dog's name, Cooper Gillespie, with Sally Sampson.

William Haefeli ("You Are Cordially Invited . . . ," p. 122) has been a *New Yorker* cartoonist since 1998.

P. C. Vey ("Bad Business, Inc.," p. 126) is a cartoonist and illustrator whose work has also appeared in the *Times* and the *Wall Street Journal.*

Alex Gregory ("The Hollywood Party," p. 138) is a television writer living in Los Angeles.

Gary Larson (Cover) has released a two-volume set of all his syndicated cartoons, "The Complete Far Side: 1980-1994."

John Lahr ("Chasing the Witch," p. 100), the magazine's senior drama critic, is currently working on a biography of Tennessee Williams.

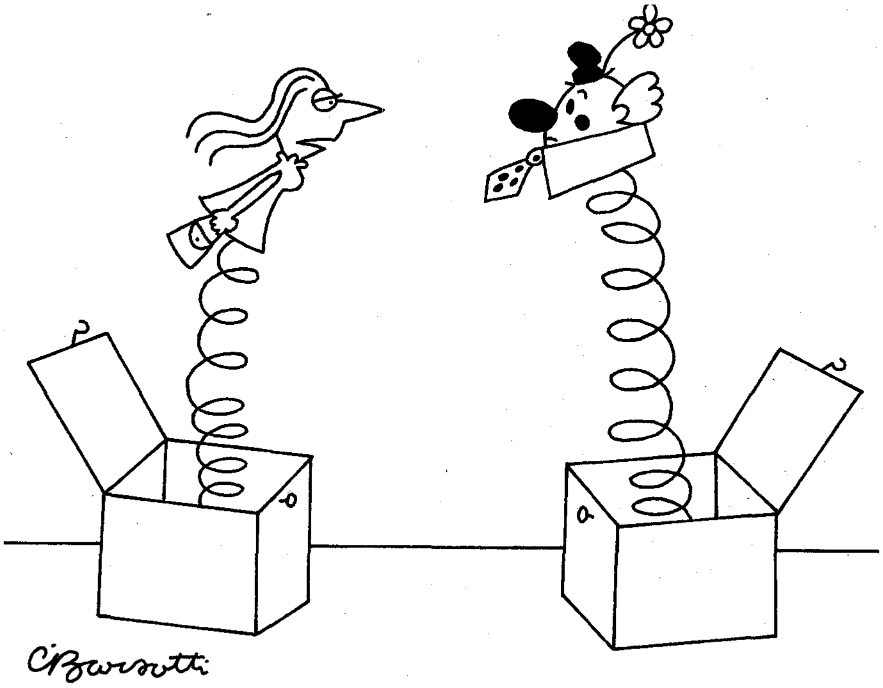
Roz Chast ("Viva Las Vegas," p. 134) will publish a new collection of cartoons, "The Party, After You Left," in the spring.

Mike Shenk, Amy Goldstein, and Robert Leighton (Cartoon Crossword, p. 136) are partners in Puzzability, a puzzle-writing company they started in 1996. Their puzzles appear regularly in magazines and on Web sites.

Danny Shanahan ("Shanahan's," p. 130; Cartoon, p. 132) has a new book, "More Weird and Wonderful Words," which came out last month.

Paul Goldberger (The Sky Line, p. 168), the magazine's architecture critic, is working on a book about Ground Zero.

Charles Barsotti (Cartoons, pp. 16, 132; The Back Page, p. 174) has been a contributor since 1962. ♦



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THE MAIL

LISTENING TO SPIES

Seymour M. Hersh, in his article on intelligence about Iraq, suggests that Bush Administration officials erred by not relying enough upon analysts to decide what information they needed ("The Stovepipe," October 27th). The weapons-of-mass-destruction imbroglio, Hersh writes, came about because policymakers "bypassed" procedures for "vetting" reports and acquired "direct . . . access to sensitive intelligence." Skilled and experienced analysts can undeniably provide valuable input that policymakers should wish to hear. But Hersh is wrong to assert that there is anything inappropriate about policymakers bridling when analysts—in the remarkable choice of words of one whom he quotes—attempt to "prevent" them from reading intelligence reports themselves. There should be (and is) no taboo about reading "raw" reports; at the State Department, for instance, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research provides policymakers a packet of just such raw reports every day, and has for years. Good analysts recognize that probing questions from a knowledgeable consumer of intelligence are a positive thing, and that dialogue about the merits and demerits of intelligence enriches policymaking and analysis alike. Hersh should have spent more time evaluating the credibility of his own sources.

Christopher A. Ford
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Verification and Compliance
Washington, D.C.

The picture that Hersh draws is of a well-informed C.I.A. bowing to an ideologically driven Administration's demands for data that support its actions. Alas, the C.I.A. has a long record of poor intelligence work. This was the agency that was caught off guard when the Soviet system collapsed. The Bush Administration, compared with its immediate predecessor, is merely more inept in international affairs, and more intrusive in the day-to-day operations of the agency. But such interference, and the fact that C.I.A. analysts received "no consistent backup from Tenet and his senior staff," is no justification for them to assume a defeatist attitude and, as Hersh reports, "provide the intelligence that was wanted." Such behavior is utterly unprofessional, unacceptable, and, in the context of national security, unpatriotic. If these people thought that they were no longer able to carry on honestly, they always had the honorable option of resigning.

Harry Lieber
Vancouver, B.C.

Hersh notes that the "yellowcake" uranium that Iraq supposedly sought from Niger "can be used to make fuel for nuclear reactors. It can also be converted, if processed differently, into weapons-grade uranium." These words, though technically true, conceal that the conversion requires protracted chemical processing and isotope-enrichment-using equipment, which Iraq did not possess. After 1991, its ore-processing plants and other facilities were destroyed, and have not been rebuilt. The purchase would not have made a difference to Iraq's nuclear potential for years to come, let alone posed an imminent threat. It would not, realistically, be a "smoking gun," a gun, or even ammunition.

Wolfgang K. H. Panofsky
Director Emeritus, Stanford Linear Accelerator Center, Stanford University
Stanford, Calif.

Hersh writes, "The point is not that the President and his senior aides were consciously lying. What was taking place was much more systematic." Is there a difference? To dismantle the intelligence-filtering process was to put the Administration in a position to deceive Congress and the press. The system was rigged to lie, with the political end of falsely justifying a war.

William E. Jackson, Jr.
Davidson, N.C.

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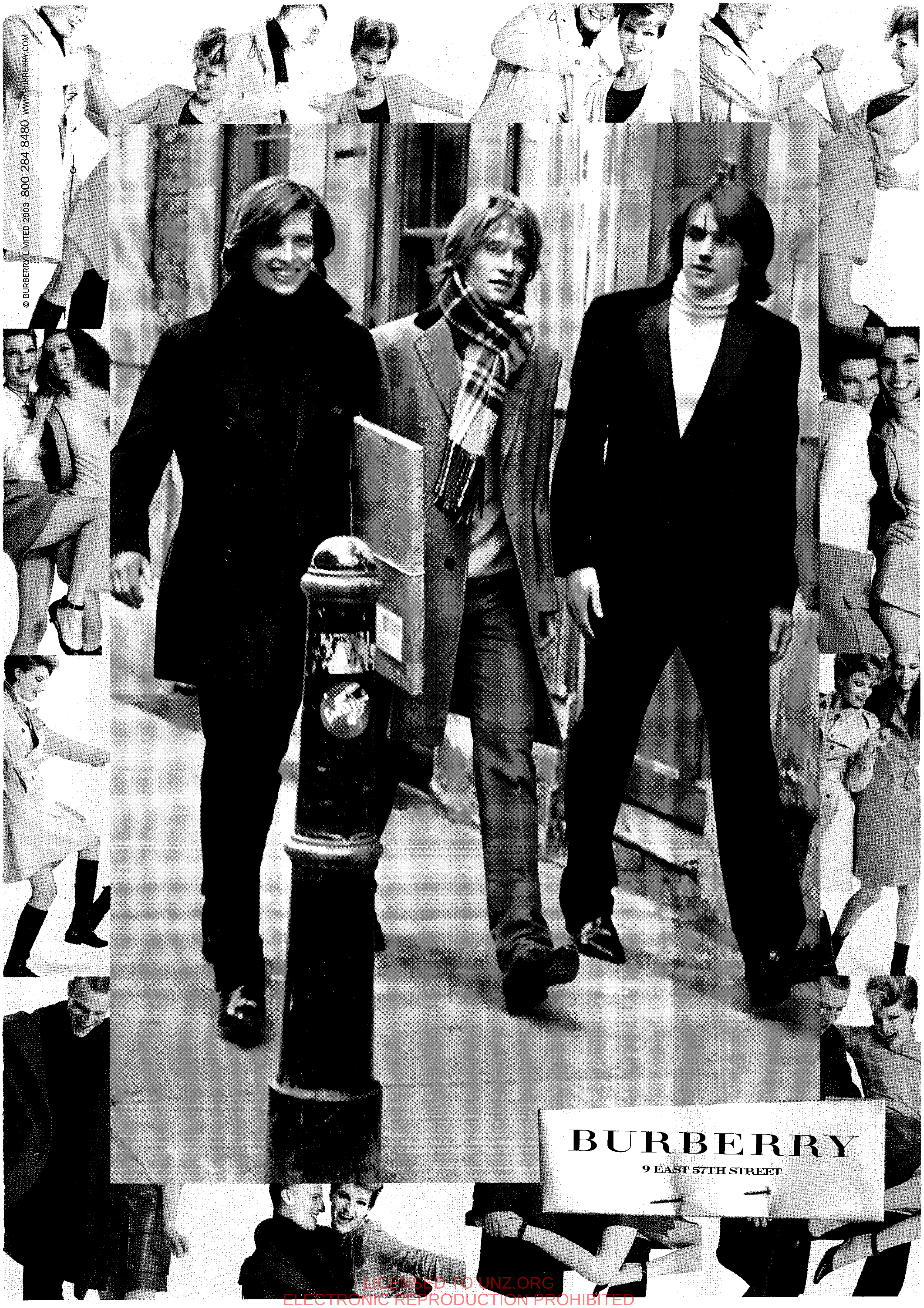
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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

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ANNA IN THE TROPICS
Nilo Cruz's Pulitzer Prize-winning play about a man who reads Tolstoy to workers in a Cuban cigar factory stars Jimmy Smits and Daphne Rubin-Vega. Directed by Emily Mann. In previews. Opens Nov. 16 at 6:30. (Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOBBI BOLAND
Farrah Fawcett stars in a comedy by Nancy Hasty, about a former Miss Florida who teaches charm and deportment to young women in a small town. Directed by David Esbjornson. In previews. (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

BRIGHT IDEAS
In a satire by Eric Coble, pushy suburban parents will stop at nothing to get their child into a selective preschool. John Rando directs. Opens Nov. 12 at 8. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE
Tony Kushner's new musical, with music by Jeanine Tesori, is set in Louisiana in 1963 and tells the story of the friendship between a black maid and the son of the Jewish family she works for. Directed by George C. Wolfe. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-239-6200.)

DOLLHOUSE
In a twisted take on Ibsen's drama "A Doll's House," adapted and directed by Lee Breuer and produced by Mabou Mines, a cast of men shorter than four feet tall bully towering women. In previews. (St. Ann's Warehouse, 38 Water St., Dumbo, Brooklyn. 718-254-8779.)

HENRY IV
A constellation of stars performs in an adaptation by Dakin Matthews of Shakespeare's history play, which combines Part I and Part II into a performance that lasts under four hours. With Kevin Kline as Falstaff, Michael Hayden as Prince Hal, Audra McDonald as Lady Percy, Dana Ivey as Mistress Quickly, and Ethan Hawke as Hotspur. Directed by Jack O'Brien. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

I AM MY OWN WIFE
Doug Wright's one-man play about a real-life German transvestite who survived the Nazis and the Communists—with all parts brilliantly played by Jefferson Mays—jumps to Broadway after a successful Off Broadway run. Directed by Moisés Kaufman. In previews. (Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

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JACKIE MASON'S LAUGHING ROOM ONLY
He's back. In previews. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 212-307-7171.)

NEVER GONNA DANCE
A new musical based on the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers vehicle "Swing Time," featuring the music of Jerome Kern. Directed by Michael Greif. In previews. (Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH
A new play by John Kani, set in South Africa in the postapartheid era, centers on the emotions of a black South African man whose brother has died in exile. Directed by Janice Honeyman. Previews begin Nov. 15. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

OLDEST LIVING CONFEDERATE WIDOW TELLS ALL
Ellen Burstyn stars in an adaptation by Martin Tahse of Allan Gurganus's saga about a hundred-year-old woman's memories of her long life. Directed by Don Scardino. In previews. Opens Nov. 17 at 6:45. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.)

ONE
Double Helix Theatre Company's solo-play festival includes Andrea Reese's tribute to Jackie Kennedy, "Cirque Jacqueline," Pat Galante's comedy about hunger, "The Gimme Hole," and eight other plays. Opens Nov. 13 at 7. Through Nov. 23. (Phil Bosakowski Theatre, 354 W. 45th St. 212-352-3101. For complete festival schedule, see www.doublehelixtheatre.org.)

TABOO
In a musical about the London club scene of the early eighties, Euan Morton plays the pop star Boy George, and Boy George himself (a.k.a. George O'Dowd) plays the performance artist Leigh Bowery. With a book adapted for the American stage by Charles Busch and music by O'Dowd. Directed by Christopher Renshaw. In previews. Opens Nov. 13 at 8. (Plymouth, 235 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHERE WE'RE BORN
Marin Ireland leads the cast in a new play by Lucy Thurber, about a young woman who returns to the poor town in Massachusetts where she grew up. Directed by Will Frears. Previews begin Nov. 12. Opens Nov. 17 at 8. (Rattlestick, 224 Waverly Pl. 212-868-4444.)

WONDERFUL TOWN
A revival of the musical based on the book "My Sister Eileen," which was derived from Ruth McKenney's *New Yorker* stories about her sister in Greenwich Village. With music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Comden and Green. Directed by Kathleen Marshall. In previews. (Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

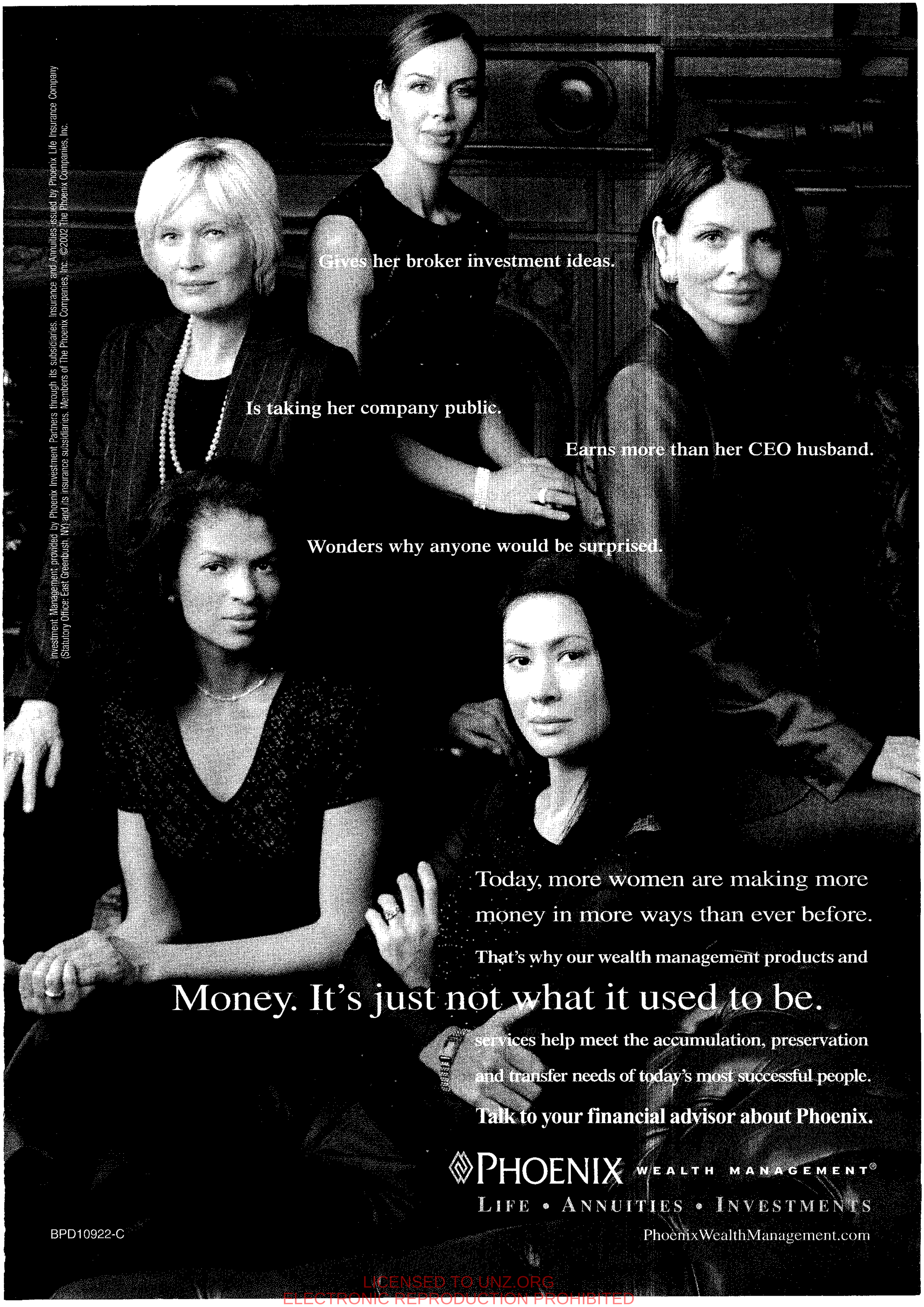
THE BOY FROM OZ
The charming, wildly hardworking performer Hugh Jackman has been put in the awkward position of having to prove that the Australian singer-songwriter Peter Allen—who was discovered by Judy Garland and who married her daughter Liza Minnelli—is worthy of our attention. Just this side of overly hunky, Jackman is a dream of sweetness. He does everything he can to sell the show, and the girls in the audience love him. But the production that swirls around him undermines him. He is never allowed to build on Allen's quieter moments, and nearly all the other actors try to upstage him—as if they had better things to do than engage with the star. (Reviewed in our issue of 10/27/03.) (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CARETAKER
The Roundabout presents a revival of Harold Pinter's breakthrough play, from 1960, starring Patrick Stewart, Kyle MacLachlan, and Aidan Gillen. Directed by David Jones. (Reviewed in this issue.) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF
The linchpin of this superb revival of Tennessee Williams's mid-fifties masterpiece is Ned Beatty, who plays Big Daddy Pollitt, the owner of "twenty-eight thousand acres of the richest land this side of the valley Nile." Beatty is a dangerous actor, and he catches all of Big Daddy's cunning and cruelty. Ashley Judd, as Maggie the Cat, and Jason Patric, as her husband, Big Daddy's son Brick, are worthy opponents. Judd brings movie-star beauty and steeliness to the role—and, beneath her ladylike veneer, a brave heart. Directed by Anthony Page. (11/10/03) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FAME ON 42ND STREET
The movie that became a television series now becomes a musical, with a book by José Fernandez, lyrics by Jacques Levy, and music by Steve Margoshes. Directed by Drew Scott Harris and choreographed by Lars Bethke. (Little Shubert, 422 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

IRON
In Rona Munro's new play, a young woman visits her mother, imprisoned for killing her father, after



Gives her broker investment ideas.

Is taking her company public.

Earns more than her CEO husband.

Wonders why anyone would be surprised.

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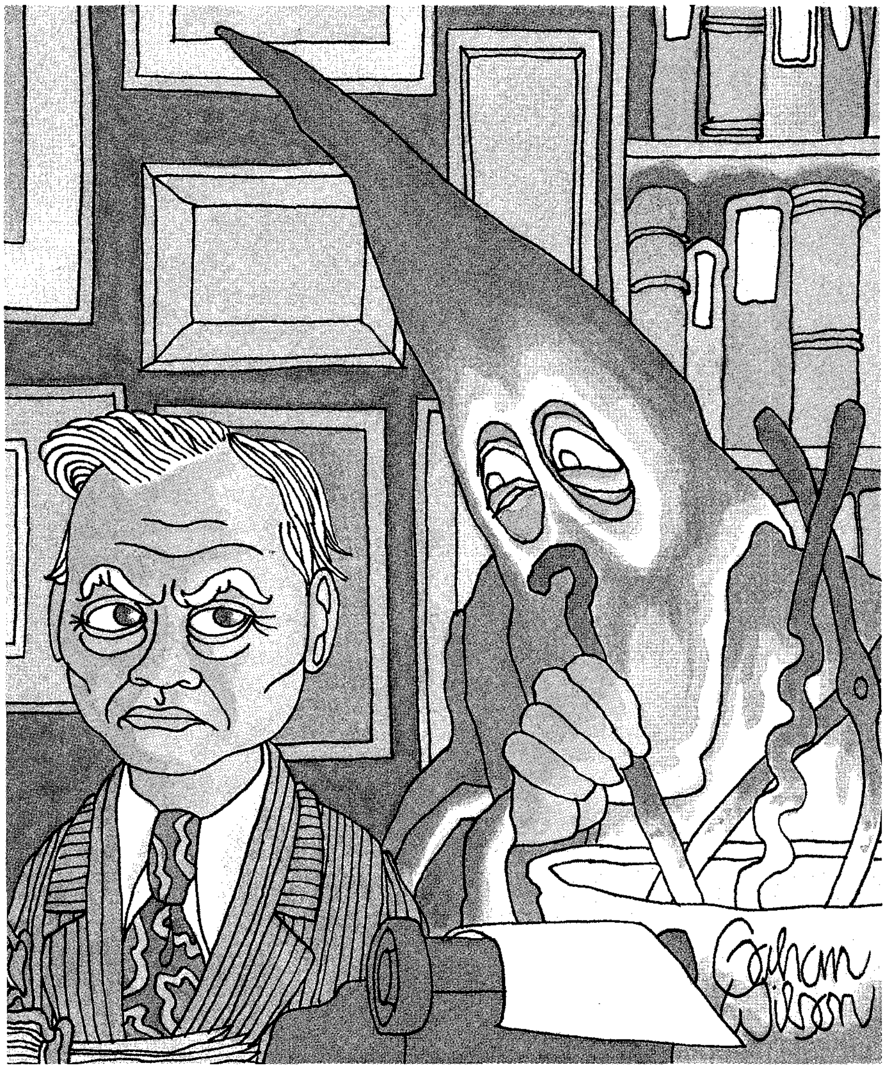


"Are you now or have you ever been Gore Vidal?" (Vidal joins the rotating cast of stars who have played the blacklisted Hollywood screenwriter Dalton Trumbo in the two-man play "Trumbo," at the Westside, November 11-16.)

an absence of fifteen years. The interactions of the two women as each tries to envision all that she's missed and misunderstood form the core of the play. Munro's crystal-clear writing reveals the universal in the specific without ever seeming obvious. A powerhouse performance by Lisa Emery, as the mother, propels the drama. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro. (Manhattan Theatre Club, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE LADY NEXT DOOR

A love triangle between Eastern European immigrants turns a tenement into a Yiddish Melrose Place, in a lusty comedy from 1915 by Leon Kobrin. Velvel (Sam Guncler), a recent arrival from the shtetl, has changed his name to Willie, shaved his beard, donned a boater hat, and started courting his neighbor's wife. Clara, a rouge-loving Romanian, dislikes herring, hates her herring-loving husband, Gimpl (the hilarious I. W. Firestone), and gamely accepts Willie's advances. Eventually, if not quietly, the meshugaas ends happily. With English supertitles. Directed by Allen Lewis Rickman. (Folksbiene Yiddish Theatre, J.C.C., 334 Amsterdam Ave. 212-239-6200.)

LEGACY CODES

Pan Asian Rep presents a play by Cherylene Lee inspired by the Wen Ho Lee case, about a Taiwan-born physicist who is suspected of compromising American national security. Directed by Ron Nakahara. (West End, 263 W. 86th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE LONG CHRISTMAS RIDE HOME

Paula Vogel's latest play begins with three siblings on a fateful Christmas Day and flashes forward to the consequences the day has for the children as adults. Vogel distills family dynamics to their essence and, though the plot is schematic, strong acting, particularly by Mark Blum and Randy Graff, as the parents, helps create an affecting evening. The production is enhanced by Basil Twist's Bunraku puppets, which represent the siblings when they are young. Directed with good pacing by Mark Brokaw. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

LYSISTRATA

Aristophanes's comic classic about antiwar wives gets a timely update at the Jean Cocteau Repertory. Directed by David Fuller. (Bouwerie Lane, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

Shakespeare's drama joins "The Rivals" in rotating repertory at The Pearl. Directed by Shepard Sobel. (Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.)

NOBODY DON'T LIKE YOGI

In this one-man play starring Ben Gazzara, Yogi Berra, the beloved Yankee catcher and quipster, returns to Yankee Stadium after a fourteen-year feud with the Boss. Thomas Lysaght's script serves up plenty of famous Yogi-isms ("You can observe a lot by watching"), and Gazzara has Yogi down, from his head-scratching wit to his pigeon-toed gait. Directed by Paul Linke. (Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM

The intention of Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros's witty, pugnacious play, which opens to the sound of a low-flying chopper and the sight of a sumptuous Manhattan dinner party, is to punch the lights out of every intellectual pose. Under the confident and precocious direction of Will Frears, "Omnium Gatherum" is full of polemicists, but it is not itself a polemic. It is, more accurately, a provocation—a show of theatrical fireworks to enlighten our darkness. (10/6/03) (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

ONE FAMILY ONE CHILD ONE DOOR

Billed as a black comedy, Joanna Chan's play about a rural Chinese family's struggle with the one-child-per-family law has moments of fun, and the family's faith in itself is touching. But the script and acting lack nuance and impact, making the story unbelievable. The one exception is a moving performance by Hana Kitasei, as the family's fourteen-year-old daughter, who is wracked by guilt at the fact that her very existence means that her parents can't ever have a son. (Bank Street Theatre, 155 Bank St. 212-868-4444. Closes Nov. 23.)

PRIVATE JOKES, PUBLIC PLACES

Anthony Rapp stars in Oren Safdie's X-Acto sharp comedy about the pretense of the architectural establishment. The play, which had a brief and successful run last spring, is the inaugural production of the Theatre at the Center for Architecture. Directed by Maria Mileaf. (536 LaGuardia Pl. 212-239-6200.)

THE RETREAT FROM MOSCOW

Resignation has settled over the union of an English couple, Edward (John Lithgow), a high-school history teacher, and Alice (Eileen Atkins), in William Nicholson's powerful evocation of a dying marriage. As Lithgow plays him, Edward is a big, passive man with a small, dithering voice; he hides behind his books, his silences, and his vagueness. Alice, cunningly shaded by Atkins's keen intelligence and sense of humor, is both an appealingly batty woman and an emotional terrorist. We are told that Napoleon took four hundred and fifty thousand men into Russia and that only twenty thousand of them survived. Edward and Alice's reserved son Jamie (Ben Chaplin) may not be one of the survivors in the family battle. The play's last retreat belongs to him—a retreat from maturity. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (11/3/03) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

SEXAHOLIX: A LOVE STORY

John Leguizamo returns to Broadway with an update of his comic one-man show. (Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200.)

SIX DANCE LESSONS IN SIX WEEKS

In Richard Alfieri's strained new comedy, set in Florida, Mark Hamill plays Michael, a cartoonishly queeny dance teacher, with a boyish bitchiness that's part Bart Simpson, part Carson Kressley. Lily (the lovely Polly Bergen), his aged snowbird pupil, picks fights with him to build rapport, and the two of them do some fine dance numbers while exchanging insights fit for Hallmark cards. Directed by Arthur Allan Seidelman. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

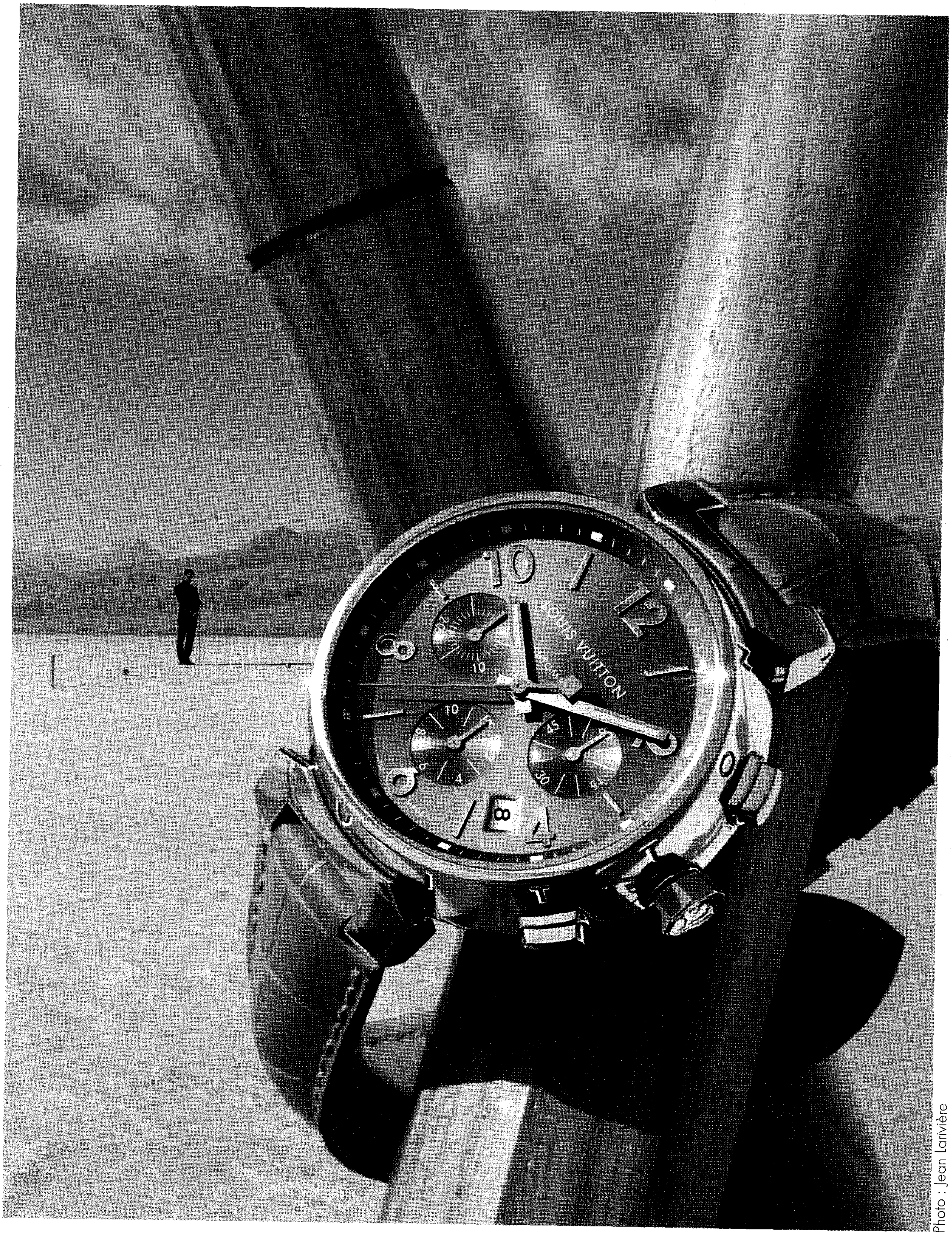
TATJANA IN COLOR

Beverly Cleary meets Nabokov in Julia Jordan's subversive new play, loosely based on a true story, about a twelve-year-old Austrian girl (Kate Wetherhead) who becomes obsessed with the artist Egon Schiele (Glenn Fitzgerald). Lured by his oranges, his catlike coyness, and his louche life, she stalks him, begs him to paint her naked, and spies on him at play with his mistress (Rebecca Wisocky), a creamy-skinned creature in silken deshabille who strikes poses from well-known Schiele paintings throughout. Tatjana wants to be a muse, but she ends up as Tatjana the Pest. Beautifully directed by Will Pomerantz. (Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

TRUMBO

In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee accused Dalton Trumbo—the screenwriter for such movies as "Spartacus"—of Communist leanings. During the next thirteen years he was banned from working in his chosen field. In his son Christopher Trumbo's moving and evocative stage portrait, based on letters Trumbo wrote to his family, friends, and enemies, a rotating roster of stars takes the lead role, including, this week, Gore Vidal,

GAHAN WILSON



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LOUIS VUITTON

reading Trumbo's letters, and Gordon MacDonald plays Christopher, providing the narration that binds them together. Directed by Peter Askin. (9/15/03) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE VIOLET HOUR
A new play by Richard Greenberg ("Take Me Out"), about a young publisher and a mysterious machine, stars Robert Sean Leonard, Robin Miles, Scott Foley, Dagmara Dominczyk, and Mario Cantone. Directed by Evan Yionoulis. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?
Wendy Spero's father, whom she calls Gary, died when she was nine months old, so she was raised by her mother, an overprotective, Dr. Ruth-like sex therapist. In her touching one-woman comedy show, the pixieish Spero unspools the narrative of her life, from smoking a joint with her boss to finding her father's college diary. (Upright Citizens Brigade, 307 W. 26th St. 212-366-9176.)

WICKED
A new musical telling the back story of "The Wizard of Oz" is an exercise in high camp. "The Wizard of Oz" was dedicated to hope; "Wicked" is dedicated to irony. The Wicked Witch, Elphaba (played by the excellent Idina Menzel), turns out to be good, while Glinda the Good (Kristen Chenoweth) is exposed as a smug, ambitious, manipulative bitch, with little talent for sorcery. Chenoweth, who can hold her high C's and twirl a magic wand like a majorette, delivers the goods. But no amount of support from its stars can get this musical soufflé to rise. (11/10/03) (Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.)

WILDER
In Erin Cressida Wilson's new "chamber musical," an old man looks back on his sexual awakening as a Depression-scarred denizen of a Colorado brothel. The evening offers plaintive Appalachian sounds, the acting of John Cullum, and the sensual presence of Lacey Kohl, but the piquant parts are richer than the theatrical whole. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Closes Nov. 14.)

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BECKETT/ALBEE
Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.

BEYOND RECOGNITION
Abingdon Theatre Arts Complex, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

GOLDA'S BALCONY
Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

NINE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

THE RIVALS
Theatre 80, at 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802.

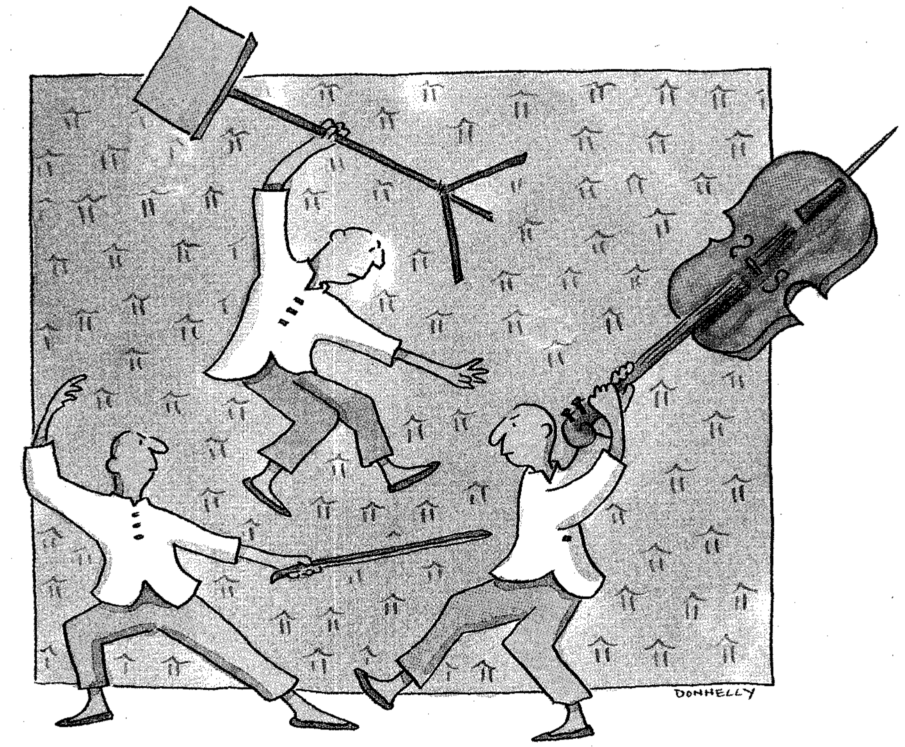
ROUNDING THIRD
John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.



Taiwan's Cloud Gate Dance Theatre performs "Moon Water" at BAM.

LIZA DONNELLY

DANCE

ROSAS
Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker's Belgian company arrives at BAM's Next Wave Festival, accompanied by a surging score, "Music for 18 Musicians," by Steve Reich, played live by the percussion group Ictus. Less obviously rigorous than "Drumming," which De Keersmaeker brought here in 2001, "Rain" begins with ten dancers pouring onto the stage in a pool of golden light, surrounded by a curtain made of tasselled ropes. The entire company is in uninterrupted motion for a full seventy minutes. As the light darkens to violet, they rush through the curtain in a torrent. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 12 at 7 and Nov. 13-15 at 7:30.)

CLOUD GATE DANCE THEATRE OF TAIWAN
Bach's magisterial Six Suites for Solo Cello provide the accompaniment for "Moon Water," Lin Hwai-min's evening-length dance based on Tai Chi movement. Though the work may be seen as a study in Taoist philosophy, from a purely aesthetic point of view it is ravishing. Deep lunges and rippling torsos and arms become a flock of birds in motion or a spilling fountain. As a thin plane of water spreads along the stage, the dancers delicately splash and slide. The light fabric of their costumes clings to them like the drapery on Greek sculpture. (BAM's Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Nov. 18 at 7:30. Through Nov. 22.)

DANCE CUBA
Billed as the Cuban "Riverdance," this troupe of sixteen women, led by the choreographer Lizt Alfonso, is more like the Rockettes. They wear flamenco pumps instead of tap shoes and swirl ruffled skirts or black flared trousers instead of showing leg, but the disciplined precision is the same. Their lockstep maneuvers won the dancers an A rating from Cuba's Ministry of Culture. Accompanied by musicians who play and sing Afro-Cuban music and Spanish flamenco. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 14 at 7, Nov. 15 at 2 and 7, and Nov. 16 at noon and 5. Through Nov. 30.)

ROSEANNE SPRADLIN DANCE
Spradlin's Bessie-winning trio, "under/world," inspired by photographs of New York's fetish scene, plays at the Kitchen, along with a new piece, "Rearrangement (Or a Spell for Mortals)," in which two dancers perform linked activities until one of them abruptly stops, leaving the lone sound of a fist on a thigh, or a book falling, to resound. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Nov. 13-15 at 8.)

BALLET HISPANICO
Tina Ramirez's company continues its performances of "NightClub," a new work in three sections, tango, mambo, and modern techno salsa, that is set in a nineteen-twenties Buenos Aires brothel, a nineteen-fifties club in Spanish Harlem and the present-day equivalent in New York. (Jack H. Skirball Center for the Performing Arts, 566 LaGuardia Pl. 212-992-8484. Nov. 11-14 at 8 and Nov. 15-16 at 3 and 8.)

"PLACES I'VE BEEN"
Alan Danielson and nine other dancers perform four works on the theme of the positive and negative ef-

CLUB NOTES

Dancing the night away in Chelsea.

During a burlesque show at Fez late one recent night, a sweaty drag performer lamented that the city is becoming more like the rest of America, except that you can't dance here. In fact, dancing is illegal in a bar unless it has a cabaret license (and only some three hundred places have one). It's prohibited by laws passed during the Jazz Age, which came about in part to prevent the races from mixing in a social setting. The ban is being reviewed by the Bloomberg administration, which held a public hearing about it this summer, but so far the laws remain on the books.

DAVID SIPRESS

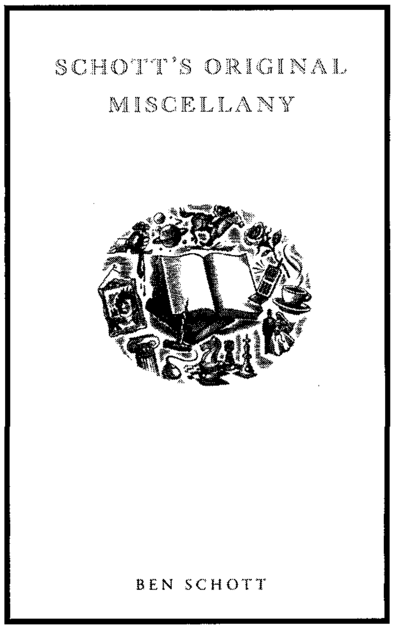
In the meantime, we'll soon have at least four new clubs where we can unleash our inner Tony Manero. Perhaps the most anticipated place is **CROBAR NEW YORK** (530 W. 28th St.; 212-629-9000), a twenty-five-thousand-plus-square-foot space scheduled to open early next month. A branch of a decade-old Chicago dance hall, Crobar has been in the works for nearly two years, and it shows. The owners combined four buildings—the main dance floor is in a former Broadway-prop warehouse—using a mix of old architectural elements (exposed steel trusses) and new materials (semi-transparent PVC-pipe walls in the men's room). They are aiming at a mixed clientele: "Gay, straight, black, white, male, female," the co-owner Callin Fortis says. "We want to desegregate the club crowd." There will be d.j.s, of course, but also live music, with an emphasis on local bands.

Around the corner, in what was once the infamous Twilo club, **SPIRIT NEW YORK** (530 W. 27th St.; 212-268-9487), due to open at the end of November, is putting a New Age face on club life. Robert Wootton, an impresario from Dublin, has created three connected enterprises in the building: Mind, a holistic healing center that will offer reflexology, massage, tarot-card readings, and the like; Soul, an organic vegetarian restaurant serving food prepared by the raw-foods specialist Chad Sarno; and Body, a ten-thousand-square-foot dance space, where a house-music-driven stage show featuring acrobats, aerialists, dancers, and fire artists will take over on Saturday nights. To keep the clientele happy, the entertainment will change with each new solstice and equinox.

Located in a block-long space that until recently was a dance hall called Ohm, the posh new club **DEEP** (16 W. 22nd St.; 212-229-2000) has an expansive lounge with Ultrasuede couches and swinging benches, a dance floor with a laser light show and more speakers than a political convention, and a subterranean room with padded walls and programmable colored lights. All of this suggests that Deep is more than just a name—it's also the state of the owners' pockets.

The sordid old Limelight space, a deconsecrated Episcopal church in Chelsea, has been reborn as **AVALON** (660 Sixth Ave.; 212-807-7780). Perhaps to banish the ghost of the Limelight's Peter Gatien, the new owners have completely updated the interior, creating V.I.P. balconies that overlook the dance floor and that have their own wait staff and private bathrooms. The cages with dancing girls and the backlit stained-glass windows in the clerestory are gone, but a taste of the old days remains in the bell tower, located just through an unmarked door to the side of the glass-enclosed d.j. booth. A perfect trysting spot, the tower still has dirty but colorful arched windows and rough stone walls.

—*John J. Donohue*


THE *NEW YORK TIMES*
BESTSELLER

SCHOTT'S ORIGINAL
MISCELLANY

BEN SCHOTT

— PORTRAITS ON AMERICAN BANKNOTES —

			OBSOLETE NOTES	
George Washington	$1		William McKinley	$500
Thomas Jeffereson	$2		Grover Cleveland	$1,000
Abraham Lincoln	$5		James Madison	$5,000
Alexander Hamilton	$10		Salmon P. Chase	$10,000
Andrew Jackson	$20		Woodrow Wilson	$100,000
Ulysses S. Grant	$50		*[large bills used for Federal translaction]*	
Benjamin Franklin	$100			

THE VOICES OF MEL BLANC

The most famous voice-actor in film history, Mel Blanc (1908-89) got his first break in 1937 working with Tex Avery on Picador Porky. Over the years Blanc voiced dozens of characters, some of which are shown below:

Woody Woodpecker
Daffy Duck
Foghorn Leghorn
Sylvester Pussycat
Bugs Bunny
Porky the Pig
Pancho
Sad Slack
Speedy Gonzales
Pepe LePew
Marvin the Martian
The Road Runner
Barney Rubble
Dino
The Tasmanian Devil

DEADMAN'S HAND

James Butler 'Wild Bill' Hickok was a stockman, soldier, spy, deputy US Marshal, multiple murderer, Sheriff of Ellis County, Ka., Marshal of Abilene, Ka., and holder of the most famous hand in poker. When he was shot dead by Jack McCall on August 2, 1876, Wild Bill was holding two black aces and two black eights – ever after known as 'Deadman's Hand'.

— ARCHAIC GOLF CLUB NOMENCLATURE —

Few formal links exist between modern and ancient golf clubs, but the list below gives an approximate guide to what comparisons can be made:

Woods No. 1	Play Club, Driver	No. 4	Jigger, Mashie Iron
No. 2	Brassie	No. 5	Mashie
No. 3	Spoon	No. 6	Spade Mashie
No. 4	Baffy	No. 7	Mashie-Biblick
		No. 8	Pitching Mashie
Irons No. 1	Driving Iron, Cleek	No. 9	Niblick, Baffing Spoon
No. 2	Cleek, Midiron	No. 10	Wedge or Jigger
No. 3	Mid-Mashie	Blank	Putter

QUOTE

"As hilarious as it is addictive."
—*Newsweek*

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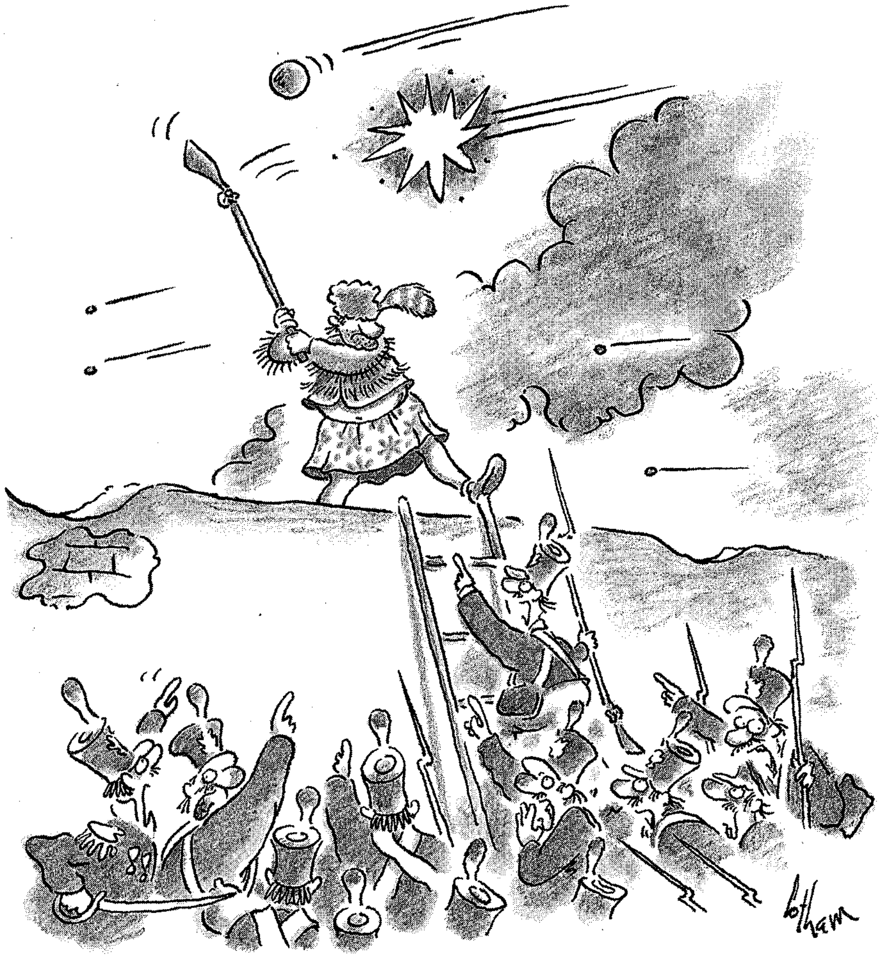

"Brave Hearts: Men in Skirts," an exhibition of the daring fashion choice, at the Met.

fects of change. (Danspace Project at St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Nov. 13-15 at 8:30 and Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

"DESCENT"
Noémie Lafrance's dizzying, site-specific dance, performed along several flights of a spiral staircase in the Clocktower building, in Tribeca, has two more weeks of performances. (108 Leonard St. 212-868-4444. Nov. 13 and Nov. 16 at 7 at 8:30 and Nov. 14-15 at 7, 8:30, and 10. Through Nov. 23.)

"SPLITSTREAM"
Yanira Castro, Nichole Canuso, and Pat Cremins present three works that look into private worlds. In Castro's "Beacon," which calls to mind the paintings of Francis Bacon, four women crawl among green light sculptures, and end up piled on top of each other, mouths open in silent screams. In "Better I'd Stayed Up," the tenderly expressive Canuso, of Philadelphia's Headlong Dance Theatre and the Moxie dance collective, along with five of her Philly colleagues, explores the internal struggle of characters whose emotional connection is disintegrating. And Pat Cremins's "Choke Go Up" evokes Piranesi's prison drawings: tables and chairs descend from the ceiling on pulleys, and women dressed in paper costumes clamber aboard. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Nov. 13-15 at 7.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE
Set to the music of Shostakovich, Villa-Lobos, and Jelly Roll Morton, Fagan's newest work, "DanceCollageForRomie," celebrates the late painter Romare Bearden, with whom he shares a favorite subject: African-American life. Performed with last year's "Translation Transition" and excerpts from Fagan's 1991 collaboration with Wynton Marsalis, "Griot New York." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Nov. 11-15 and Nov. 18 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 2 and 7:30. Through Nov. 23.)

NOCHE FLAMENCA
The tenth-anniversary performances of Martin Santangelo's Madrid-based company. His six musicians are male, but the three dancers are women, one of them Santangelo's wife, Soledad Barrio, whose dancing exemplifies the authenticity, ardor, and depth of the troupe's pared-down aesthetic. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-239-6200. Nov. 11-14 at 8, Nov. 15 at 3 and 8, and Nov. 16 at 3. Through Nov. 30.)

MOLISSA FENLEY AND DANCERS
The U.S. première of Fenley's "Kuro Shio" ("Black Salt" in Japanese), a piece commissioned by the National Theatre of Korea and named after an ocean current that travels along the coasts of Korea and Japan. Also on the program are an ensemble work, "Water Courses," the solo "Tala," danced by Fenley, and "Hemispheres," a duet for Fenley and Paz Tanjuaquio. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Nov. 14-16 at 8.)

PLACID BABY
Sam Kim's new piece about Japanese teen-age girlhood is as enigmatic as the Sofia Coppola film "Lost in Translation," whose wry ethos it echoes. Six women, each representing a type—a bored cheerleader, a catwalk model, a nymphet—hang out in their bedrooms, jiggling to a mix tape of eighties synth classics and Japanese bubble-gum pop. Kim captures adolescent blankness with a wit so sly you might miss it entirely. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288. Nov. 13-15 at 7:30 and Nov. 16 at 5.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

PAT METHENY
Pat Metheny's most recent album, "One Quiet Night," is an intimate affair: the jazz-guitar deity performs solo with his custom-built acoustic instrument, ruminating on moody originals and the odd cover ("Ferry Across the Mersey"). How this material will transfer to the cavernous space of the Beacon Theatre is anyone's guess. Fortunately, the Metheny trio, which includes the bassist Christian McBride and the drummer Antonio Sanchez, will be on hand to provide big, loud and proud fun. (Broadway at 74th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 14 at 8.)

PRIMUS
Veterans of alternative rock's early-nineties heyday, this San Francisco band once culled fans from the flannel-clad Lollapalooza crowd as well as from the jam-band scene. Les Claypool's frenetic bass playing and skewed sensibility defined the group's weird sound, which inexplicably penetrated the mainstream pop charts in brief spates. The group's output slackened in recent years as Claypool went off to do his own thing, but the original trio is now back on tour with a multimedia show that includes a complete rendition of their 1991 album, "Sailing the Seas of Cheese." (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 14 at 8.)

AMERICAN SONGBOOK
Mary Cleere Haran, a cabaret singer who mixes barbed comic observation with genuine scholarly enthusiasm, offers a master class on Nov. 13 at 8. The following night at 8, she talks about the source of her great affection for New York City and Broadway; she'll be showing clips and singing "That's Entertainment," "A Shine on Your Shoes," and other songs from the 1953 Fred Astaire-Cyd Charisse film, "The Band Wagon." On Nov. 15 at 8 and 10 she performs her signature songs. (Kaplan Penthouse, Lincoln Center, 212-721-6500.)

DAN ZANES
Formerly of the eighties alternative-rock group the Del Fuegos, Zanes has been enjoying a career renaissance since taking aim at the preschool set. His latest family-friendly album is "House Party." (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Nov. 15 at noon and 2:30.)

DEREK TRUCKS BAND
The nephew of the longtime Allman Brothers drummer Butch Trucks transcends the strict blues-rock formula of his family. With **Vusi Mahlasela**, a South African singer with a sweet voice and a dramatic range. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-840-2824. Nov. 15 at 7:30.)

KING CRIMSON
The prolific progressive-rock ensemble led by the maverick guitarist Robert Fripp has produced everything from atmospheric arrangements (the seventies) to angular guitar textures crossed with dance rhythms (the eighties) to weighty bits of experimental noise (today). With the reconvened **Living Colour.** (Beacon Theatre. Nov. 15 at 8.)

AEROSMITH / KISS
These outfits may be ancient beasts from a forgotten age, but ticket sales for this tour have been robust. Fans apparently can't get enough of Steven Tyler's hyperactive libido and Gene Simmons's bloody shenanigans. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

RANCID
This California group's dedication and infectious energy (as well as their Mohawks, safety pins, and tattoos) defy any claims that punk rock is dead. (Roseland. Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The singers Diana Ross, Dee Dee Bridgewater, Shirley Horn, and Cleo Laine, as well as the pianist Marian McPartland, are among the legends who will join Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in a concert titled "Here's to the Ladies: A Celebration of Great Women in Jazz." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5050. Nov. 17 at 7.)

GODSMACK
This unsmiling Boston band, named after a song by the nineties grunge-metalheads Alice in Chains, pounds out angst-filled guitar rock, but without the tunefulness that made their Seattle heroes memorable. (Hammerstein Ballroom, Manhattan Center, 311 W. 34th St. 212-307-7171. Nov. 18 at 7:30.)

FRANK COTHAM

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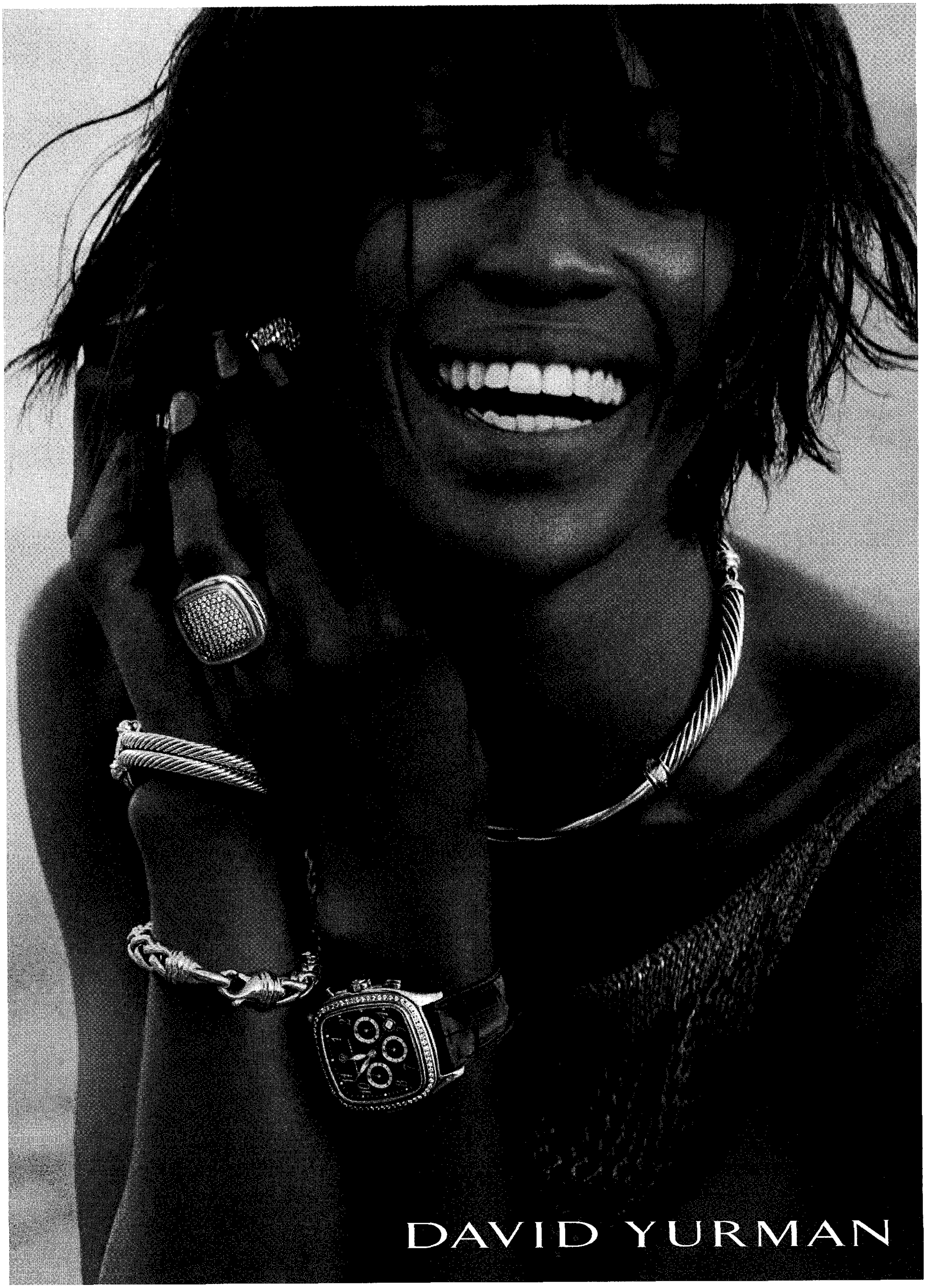
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MADISON AT 64TH SOUTH COAST PLAZA

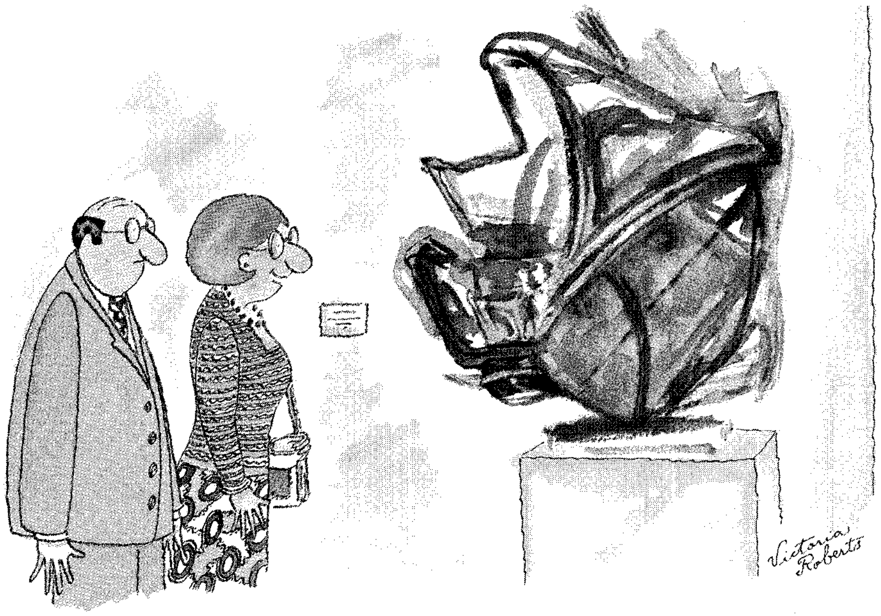
CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Nov. 15: **Little Feat.** Although it has never been the same since the death of its leader, Lowell George, in 1979, this great Southern-fried band always makes up in enthusiasm what it lacks in inspiration. Nov. 17: The brainchild of former Public Image Ltd. drummer Martin Atkins, **Pigface** is best thought of as a supergroup from hell; its members are drawn from the realms of punk, industrial, and alternative rock. While the band has never had a firm lineup, past contributors have included members of Ministry, Killing Joke, Dead Kennedys, Tool, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Nine Inch Nails.

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—Nov. 12: The folk-bluegrass-klezmer alchemists known as the **Wayfaring Strangers.** Nov. 15: **Citizen Cope** is Clarence Greenwood, a Memphis-born singer-songwriter who recently moved here from Washington, D.C. He favors music that often falls through the cracks; complex narratives about everything from race to life on the streets to religion are layered over slow grooves and funky beats. One thing working in his favor is Carlos Santana, who offered the Citizen a spot on his 2002 collaborative album, "Shaman." With **Rachel Davis** and others.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Nov. 11-12: Famously featuring the actor Jason Schwartzman (best known for his role as Max Fischer in "Rushmore") on drums, **Phantom Planet** is an indie-pop combo from Los Angeles. They clear the hurdles of having a movie star in their ranks (see Keanu Reeves's Dogstar for a worst-case scenario) with a promising knack for memorable, sunny pop melodies. With a onetime indie-rock wunderkind, the singer-songwriter **Ben Lee.** Nov. 13: The haunting traditional bluegrass twang of **Gillian Welch.** Nov. 15: **Donna the Buffalo,** a winning ensemble from Ithaca, New York, seasons its country sound with a pinch of accordion and a touch of reggae. Nov. 17: The **Twilight Singers** are led by Greg Dulli, the brains behind the late Cincinnati white-boy funk combo the Afghan Whigs.



"Honey, did you remember to pay the car insurance?" (John Chamberlain, at Stone.)

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Nov. 13: **Soul Brains.** Widely cited by such established pop luminaries as the Beastie Boys, the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Henry Rollins, and Jane's Addiction as the most influential hardcore punk band of all time, the group, which was originally called Bad Brains, started in Washington, D.C., in 1979 as a group of black jazz musicians who swapped Mingus for the Ramones and then moved on to incorporate a reggae vibe. After some truly seminal and exciting records, however, the original lineup succumbed to turbulent in-fighting. Following years of false starts, the band members have settled their differences and are out promoting a greatest-hits album, "Banned in D.C.: Bad Brains Greatest Riffs."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 13: The singer-songwriter **Joe Henry,** whose restless spirit has taken him from alt-country to experimental pop, sometimes with sublime results, stops by with songs from his latest release, "Tiny Voices."

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Nov. 15: Less well known for their music than for their outspoken sexual predilections, San Francisco's **Pansy Division** are a gay rock and roll band that helped put queercore on the map, thanks in part to a 1994 tour opening for a then wildly popular Green Day. With **Les Sans Culottes.** This endearing Brooklyn ensemble plays raunchy faux-French rock that's both a sendup of and a tribute to late-period Serge Gainsbourg and punchy *yé-yé* girl pop. Nov. 16: The German electronica label Morr Music presents three of its acts: **B. Fleischmann** (sparse beats, bits of static, and a side of melody), **Ms John Soda** (surprisingly poppish with layers of intrigue and a spy-thriller feel), and **Christian Kleine** (hip-hop beats, some strings, and slightly danceable rhythms). Nov. 17: Snubbed in the eighties by critics as a poor man's U2, the **Alarm** still managed to vault a number of catchy, impassioned singles up the charts. Twenty years after their début single, "The Stand" (the video for which memorably showcased the Welsh band's flair for gravity-defying hair styles), the Alarm commemorate the anniversary with an American tour.

LUNA
171 Ludlow St. (212-260-2323)—Nov. 16: The local hip-hop country group **Battlestar America** kicks off "Downtown Opry," a monthly gathering of country bands, homemade cookies, and comedy. Battlestar's departure from a traditional country sound goes beyond pairing laconic rappers and energetic turntablists with background harmonies and fiddling: on its album, "Above Market Value," the front man, Rench, sings with a slow drawl about job losses, striving, union organizing, and other socialist concerns. With the old-timey jams of the **Brooklyn Jugs.**

LUXX
256 Grand St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-1000)—Nov. 15: The **Morr Music Tour** (see the Knitting Factory). Note: Luxx is closing this month and will soon reopen as Toybox, a gay dance club.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Nov. 15: The intense psychedelic soundscapes of **Brian Jonestown Massacre.** With the **Capitol Years,** who transform standard garage rock into something more obscure and interesting through sudden tempo changes and a seemingly apoplectic guitarist whose face turns redder with every furiously hammered lick. Nov. 16: The **Whirlwind Heat** may have got a boost from the White Stripes front man Jack White when he signed them to a record deal, but it's the intensity of their organ-driven rock that sets this trio apart.

SATALLA
37 W. 26th St. (212-576-1155)—Nov. 12: **Mamadou Diabate,** a master of the kora (a twenty-one-string Mandingo harp-lute). Nov. 15: Bands often have to endure a number of hardships—from lost royalties to tour-bus breakdowns—but few are forced into exile. Such was the fate of the outspoken Chilean folk ensemble **Inti-Illimani** when General Pinochet overthrew President Allende, in 1973. They spent fifteen years in Italy and became internationally known ambassadors for the music of their homeland. In more recent years, the group added a few younger members and began to embrace a wider range of Latin styles.

SIN-É
150 Attorney St. (212-388-0077)—Nov. 12: The gimlet-eyed songcraft of **A Don Piper Situation.** With **Maplewood,** specialists in backcountry ballads along the lines of the Flying Burrito Brothers.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Nov. 14: The evocative Brazilian guitarist **Vinicius Cantuária.** Nov. 16: **Amy Allison,** a performer who seems to sing from both her heart and her sinuses. She may be an acquired taste, but that doesn't diminish the moving sadness with which she delivers every syllable. With the local singer-songwriter **Pete Galub** and the painter turned guitarist **Walter Salas-Humara.**

WARSAW
261 Driggs Ave., Brooklyn (718-387-0505)—Nov. 12: **Guided by Voices.** The venerable indie Who-channellers are touring behind another collection of sterling rock anthems, "Earthquake Glue." The lead singer, Bob Pollard, seems to be getting frustrated with the band's lack of mainstream success, however: in their last New York appearance, when not guzzling beer or attempting to quit smoking onstage, Pollard sourly noted the Strokes' absence from the audience, and, after playing the band's single "My Kind of Soldier," complained, "Why is that not a hit?"

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Nov. 11: Hemingway saw **Orquesta Aragón** play at the Tropicana during the nineteen-fifties, in Batista's Havana. This celebrated and beloved charanga band keeps on cruising, like some miraculously preserved V-8 wonder from the era of rum cocktails, cigars, and hard-swinging cha-cha-cha. Nov. 12-15: The **Dave Holland** quintet. Holland regularly assembles crack ensembles featuring smart players and off-kilter instrumentation. This lineup, for instance, includes the saxophonist **Chris Potter,** the trombonist **Robin Eubanks,** the vibist **Steve Nelson,** and the drummer **Nate Smith.** But the focus only rarely strays from the leader, whose brilliant, industrial-strength bass work simultaneously grounds and propels the music, pushing his players into formidable post-bop improvisations.

VICTORIA ROBERTS

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Nov. 12: The guitarist **Marc Ribot** and the mandolinist **Jamie Masefield** pay tribute to the Gypsy guitar genius Django Reinhardt. Nov. 13-16: When your résumé includes singing with Sam Cooke as well as doing voice-overs for "The Rugrats," you can safely call yourself a national institution. **Lou Rawls,** he of the gravelly voice that seems to arise from the very center of the earth, has lately turned to the standards for sustenance; "Rawls Sings Sinatra," his latest album, proves that five decades onstage can teach you a few things about swing.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound murals, and through Dec. 31, **Bobby Short.**

FEINSTEIN'S AT THE REGENCY
540 Park Ave., at 61st St. (212-339-4095)—Through Nov. 15: With her perfect diction, British theatrical poise, and tendency to slip Shakespeare into the mix, **Cleo Laine** is a class act with extravagant vocal abilities and a commanding stage presence. Laine's husband and longtime performance partner, the saxophonist **John Dankworth,** leads her backing ensemble.

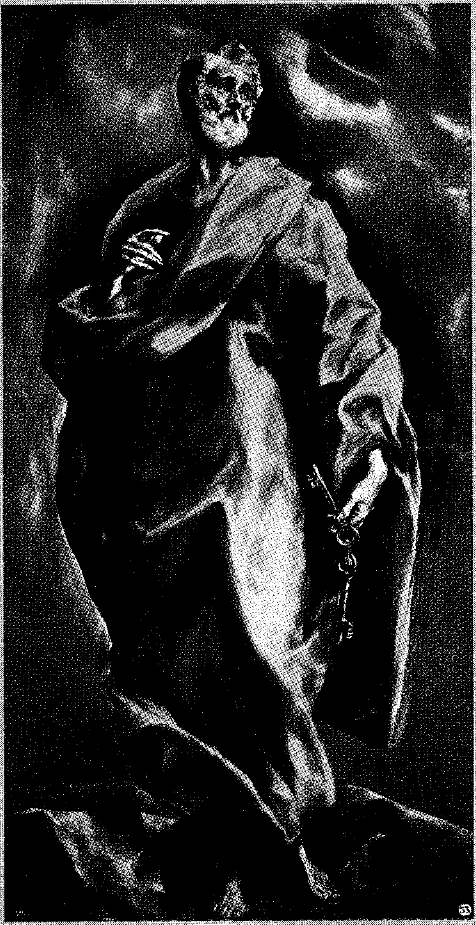
IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Nov. 16: There's no way that you haven't heard the violinist **Mark O'Connor,** whether it was on a James Taylor recording, in a classical throw-down with Yo-Yo Ma, or on one of the myriad releases for which he was the session fiddler (O'Connor has appeared on nearly five hundred albums). With all of that work, it's no surprise that this always-in-demand stylist only rarely gets to indulge in one of his great passions: the hot jazz typified by his mentor, Stéphane Grappelli. With the Django Reinhardt-obsessed guitarist **Frank Vignola** and the Grappelli alumnus **John Burr** on bass, O'Connor has all the makings of a genuine Gallic music lovefest circa 1935. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—Nov. 13: He's as confident a modern trumpet stylist as they come, and after attention-grabbing stints with the likes of Phil Woods and Eddie Palmieri, **Brian Lynch** has assembled a band that commingles his not so hidden passions for bebop and Latin music. Nov. 14-15: A bassist who has provided the indispensable bedrock for any number of present-day Latin jazz bands, **John Benitez** presents his own quintet.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Nov. 11-12: A new coöperative, **Project O** brings the trumpeter Ingrid Jensen together with the organist Gary Versace and the drummer Jon Wikan. Nov. 13-16: Bud Powell wrote the book on modern jazz piano, but the bebop-era giant also composed some durable tunes that are well worth revisiting. Doing just that will be **Wail,** consisting of such smart young improvisers as the trumpeter **Steven Bernstein,** the saxophonist **Greg Osby,** and the pianists **Uri Caine** (Nov. 13-14) and **Rodney Kendrick** (Nov. 15-16). Dining.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Nov. 17: **Judy Kuhn** (here Mondays in November) is a Broadway mainstay whose show "Finding Home" astutely sets songs by Tom Waits, Joni Mitchell, and Adam Guettel against material by the likes of Harold Arlen and Kurt Weill. Nov. 18: With his shaggy-dog raps and maraca-led jams, there's plenty of the old hippie still clinging to **Charles Lloyd.** But give him a tenor saxophone and the time-warp affectations are quickly forgotten. Few other players can summon up the seemingly opposing echoes of John Coltrane and Lester Young quite like this intensely lyrical stylist.

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200, ext. 107)—Nov. 13: So in control of an audience that resistance to her icy charms is next to impossible, the sexy singer **Ute Lemper** displays a level



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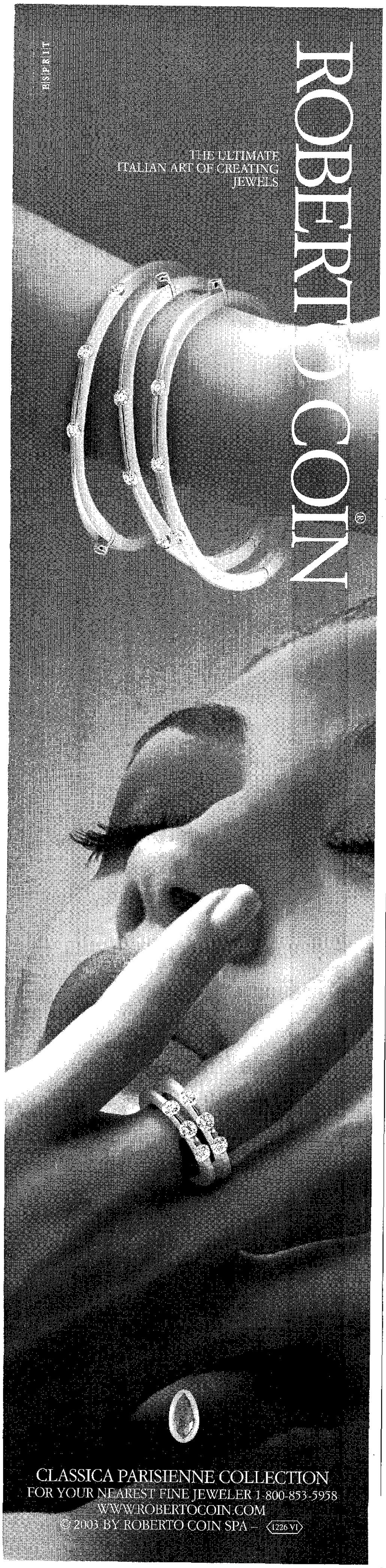
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of vocal strength and interpretive imagination that just isn't found in the vast majority of cabaret artists.

SMOKE

2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—Nov. 13-15: The **Benny Golson** quartet. The tenor saxophonist Golson, with his brawny tone, full-throttle energy, and impeccable credentials (the Jazztet, Art Blakey's Jazz Messengers), is a genuine hard-bop hero. He's also one of the greatest of jazz composers, with at least three classics to his name: "I Remember Clifford," "Whisper Not," and "Stablemates."

SWEET RHYTHM

88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (212-255-3626)—Nov. 14-15: A club called Sweet Rhythm would seem to be the appropriate venue for the keyboardist Michael Wolff to showcase his percussion-heavy ensemble **Impure Thoughts**, featuring the tabla player Badal Roy, best known for his association with Miles Davis back in the seventies.

TONIC

107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Nov. 13: Try to label **Charlie Hunter** a jazz musician and his funk, techno, pop, and world-music leanings will soon rid you of that notion. His sonic universe is as offbeat as his choice of instruments: an eight-string guitar. Nov. 15: A formidable soprano saxophonist who has neither Coltrane nor Shorter on the brain, **Jane Ira Bloom** has been dipping into deep waters recently, testing herself against edgier players and succeeding admirably.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ

351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Nov. 14-15: **Arturo O'Farrill**, the leader of the recently formed Lincoln Center Afro-Latin Jazz Orchestra, must be eager to get his steaming band into its future home, the not yet finished Columbus Circle music complex. In the meantime, this prodigious pianist appears with a frisky trio at this ambitious outer-borough club.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Nov. 16: The **Bill Charlap** trio is about as good as mainstream-piano jazz gets these days. Working with the bassist **Peter Washington** and the drummer **Kenny Washington**, the thirtysomething Charlap displays the poise and taste, and increasingly, the inner depth, of such grand stylists as Hank Jones and the late Tommy Flanagan. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

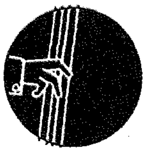
ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—The Philip Guston retrospective preserves the shock of the major painter's late-career switch, around 1967, from a tremblingly sensitive abstract style to raucous cartooning: gregarious Ku Klux Klansmen, piled-up shoes and hairy legs, one-eyed heads like lima beans in need of a shave. It was a cultural departure as harshly significant as Bob Dylan's at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. "I got sick and tired of all that purity," Guston said of his former compunctions. Many people hated the change, which put the artist's eloquent touch and color at the service of an abject vision. Who knew that late Guston would turn out to be the most influential American painting of the last quarter-century? Through Jan. 4. ♦ The tremendous El Greco retrospective celebrates art history's No. 1 troublemaker, the Cretan icon painter who got sophisticated in Venice and Rome and then, settling in Toledo in 1576, hit his stride as a pictorial mystic and rhapsode of the Counter-Reformation. His absolute originality—or weirdness, if you prefer—inspired Picasso and Pollock and still feels rawly new. The show emphasizes El Greco's more conventional, first-rate portraiture, but his vertiginous incarnations of ecclesiastical dogma are the main event. Their pictorial method (ascending figures elongate like blobs in a Lava lamp) suggests upside-down gravity. Through Jan. 11. ♦ **"Brave Hearts: Men in Skirts"** looks at the many cultures in which men wear skirts and the various uniformly unsuccessful attempts of fashion designers to add this item to the wardrobes of the men in this culture. Through Feb. 8. ♦ In **"Treasures of a Lost Art: Italian Manuscript Painting of the Middle Ages and Renaissance,"** King David, enclosed in the round of a letter "Q" and wearing what appears to be red long johns, lifts his foot from a noose and raises his eyes to heaven. He is illustrating Psalm 24:15: "For He shall pluck my feet out of the snare." The show presents a hundred and one illuminated leaves, cuttings, and volumes, with a focus on introductory capitals like that "Q" from a fifteenth-century Veronese breviary. The draftsmanship isn't always perfect, but the color is, reminding us why Dante placed a Bolognese illustrator in the company of Giotto and Cimabue on the way to paradise. Through Feb. 1. ♦ When the French diorama artist Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre invented a way to make one-of-a-kind photographs on silver-plated copper, the rage for daguerreotypes became so intense that five and a half tons of silver were used by Parisian platemakers in a single year. (The mania ended with the invention of photographic paper, in the mid-eighteen-fifties.) **"The Dawn of Photography: French Daguerreotypes, 1839-1855,"** an exhaustive and, at times, exhausting show, features a hundred and seventy-five works, from still-lifes to street scenes to portraits of well-known figures like Eugène Delacroix (looking maniacal) and Victor Hugo (looking crabby). Near the end of the show, a selection of

JAZZ NOTES



AN UPPERCUT ABOVE

Early in 1970, the filmmaker William Cayton approached the jazz trumpeter Miles Davis about preparing a score for a documentary on the life and work of the early-twentieth-century black American prizefighter Jack Johnson—a subject that as it happened, had particular resonance for Davis. Both Johnson and Davis explored, in their work and in their lives, the complex nature of black masculinity. And they both had an almost perverse interest in thumbing their noses at social mores—dating white women, driving fast cars.

The original soundtrack to the film, produced by the brilliant Teo Macero, accounts for only a small fraction of the music Davis created between February and June of 1970. In the beautifully remastered and packaged **"The Complete Jack Johnson Sessions"** (Columbia/Legacy), you can hear him searching ardently for a new sound without sacrificing his skills as an improviser. Davis's electric blues was the sound of his times: anarchic, soft, lyrical, sad, and hopeful.

Davis oversaw a large group of musicians for the sessions, including Chick Corea on electric piano, Bennie Maupin on bass clarinet, Dave Holland on electric bass, John McLaughlin and Sonny Sharrock on guitar, and Jack DeJohnette on drums. Davis had just upset the traditional jazz world with "Bitches Brew," a two-disk mix of jazz, funk, and rock that became a best seller. No one had ever heard anything like it. "Jack Johnson" further extended this marriage of the old (jazz) and the new (rock). Inspired by Jimi Hendrix's look and sound and Sly Stone's joyful synthesis of a strong funk line with near-ecclesiastical brass, Davis created a hot, contemporary sound of his own. By pumping up DeJohnette's drum line with Buddy Miles-inspired blues and psychedelia, he produced a masterwork that has not been available in its entirety until now.

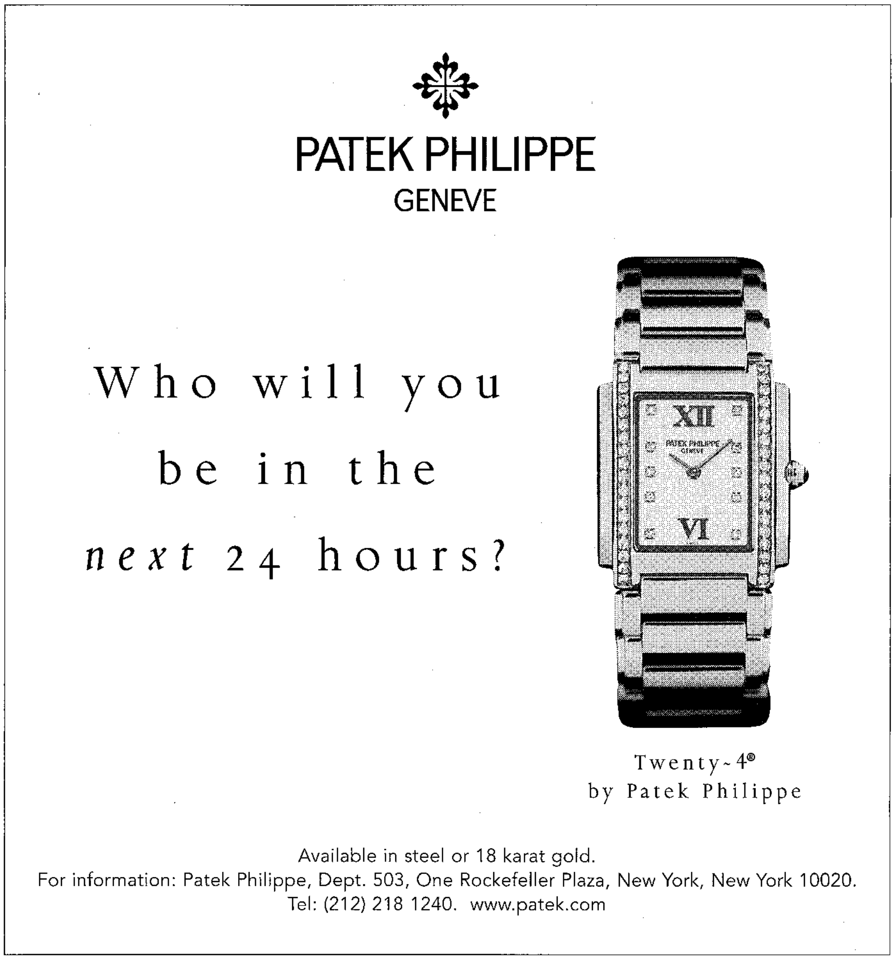
—Hilton Als

female nudes is followed by a dog, a bull, a horse, and a prosthetic limb, as if to say that all subjects are equal before the camera's neutral gaze. Through Jan. 4. ♦ **"Dreams of Yellow Mountain: Landscapes of Survival in Seventeenth-Century China."** Through Jan. 25. ♦ In the twenties, Paul Klee (1879-1940) produced a series of chromatically and geometrically inventive abstractions that have come to be known as "magic squares." Culled from the Met's Berggruen Klee collection, this group of glowing grids is accompanied by a second body of work based on shimmering curtains of dots, kabbalistic symbols, and experiments with architectural motifs. Mixing gouache, printer's ink, and oil, the small pictures emit a full blast of the mischievous, synesthetically musical spiritualism that we've come to expect from this particular member of the modernist pantheon. Through Dec. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—Liam Gillick's wall painted with intertwining bands of ochre, brown, and orange transforms the museum's entrance into a cross between a Scandinavian design center and a corporate lobby. The image suggests a magnified diagram of fibre-optic cable, which is fitting, since the project was originally conceived for a Norwegian telecommunications company. Near the ticket counter, a painted aluminum cube is suspended from the ceiling, lined with text from B. F. Skinner's "Walden Two." If the connection between the two works seems tangential, that's the point: distraction and diversion are central to Gillick's project, which sneaks his complex and subversive theories of post-utopian social space (you can find his articulate explanation of this in a museum brochure) into objects that have the polish and appeal of mass-produced design. Through Dec. 1. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"James Rosenquist"** is a pinball machine of a retrospective, gracing the museum's ramp with two-dimensional equivalents of rackety lights and bumpers. The early Pop work, which uses billboard-painting technique to create surrealistic montages of slightly outdated magazine imagery, feels immortal. It nails a recurrent effect of modernity: the rolling blind spot of the recent past. Bigger, slicker later paintings succumb to mere razzmatazz. But Rosenquist earns blanket forgiveness on the strength of his classic "F-111" (1964-65), a multi-panelled wraparound work, eighty-six feet long, that distills the madnesses of the nineteen-sixties with supple, violent majesty. Some people deem it the Great American Painting. Others have yet to look at it sufficiently. Through Jan. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—At the end of Lothar Baumgarten's film **"The Origin of the Night,"** which seems to present ninety-eight minutes of the jungle in semi-darkness, a legend (in German) appears on the screen: "Shot in the forests of the Rhine, 1973-77." It isn't a surprise, exactly. The trancelike piece is filled with rippling waters, heavy green vines, and mighty trees, with a soundtrack of ambient chirps and croaks. But viewers also see rubber tires and discarded scraps of plastic interrupting the apparent rain-forest lushness; at one point airplanes go overhead. Baumgarten composed a faux Amazon in his own polluted back yard, turning an abjectly familiar vista exotic. Through Nov. 30. ♦ The Bay Area painter Jay De Feo (1929-89) is best known for her magnum opus, "The Rose." It took her eight years (1958-66) to complete, and by the time it was extricated from her studio it weighed more than a ton. (The studio floor had grown so incrusted with paint that the artist Bruce Conner, who filmed the painting's removal, said that walking on it felt "like walking on the back of a whale.") "The Rose," with its radiant mass of silvery-white im-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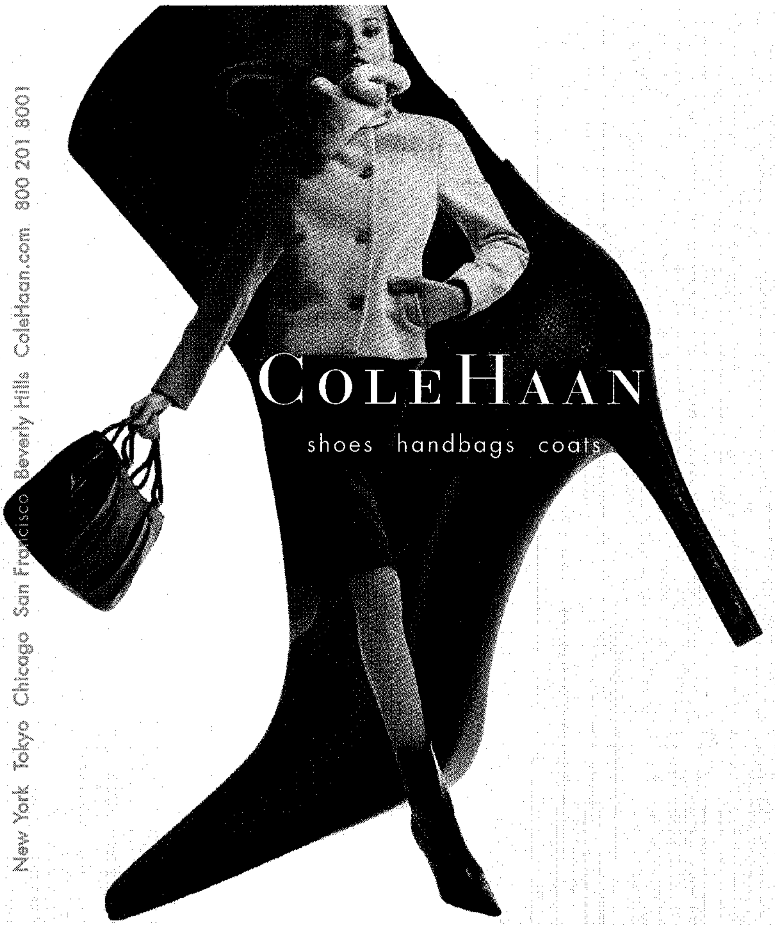
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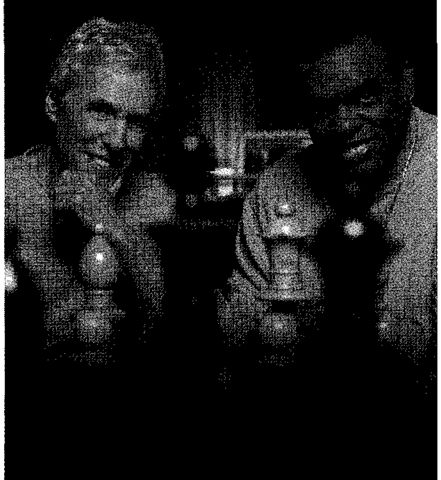

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pasto, lies literally at the center of this small but potent show, **"Beside the Rose: Selected Works by Jay De Feo."** But the show opens with a more typical gesture: a seven-foot-long drawing of a ghostly pair of eyes. Puzzling vertical lines simultaneously fracture the image and heighten its ocular intensity—a struggle between obfuscation and revelation that's at the heart of De Feo's elusive art. Through Feb. 29. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"About Time: 700 Years of European Painting,"** which has been permanently installed, primarily in the museum's Beaux Arts court, includes a vast range of works, from fourteenth-century devotional panels to a Picasso portrait of Dora Maar, although the emphasis of the collection is on the Fauves and the Impressionists. Works are grouped under rubrics: genre studies, figure studies, landscapes, and something they call "narrative strategies," in which they include an eighteenth-century Bolivian painting, "The Carpenter's Shop in Nazareth," depicting industrious angels wielding a cross-cut saw. The point of the show—offering an art-historical primer—fits with the museum's educational mission. But the quickie summation of seven centuries' worth of art blurs some of the distinctions that it introduces.

◆

Contemporary Murrano Jews in Portugal celebrating holidays in hiding; Argentinean mothers of the disappeared; Purim masqueraders in China and Africa; large family groups from Ethiopia, Yemen, India, Venezuela, and Hong Kong; denizens of Birobidzhan, the Jewish Autonomous Region, established by Stalin in 1934; Jewish hawkers of Catholic souvenirs outside St. Peter's, where hereditary licenses go back to the eighteenth century; female rabbinical students in New York City; boys from the Hebrew Academy of Las Vegas—the Diaspora includes them all, and **"The Jewish Journey: Frédéric Brenner's Photographic Odyssey"** presents their portraits in crisply documentarian black-and-white. Through Jan. 11. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

JAPAN SOCIETY
333 E. 47th St. (212-832-1155)—During three short trips to Japan (in 1931, 1950, and 1952), the American-born artist Isamu Noguchi produced some of the most compelling ceramic sculptures of the twentieth century. The pieces here range from very small—the red mottled grouping "Three Figures," made from Shigaraki stoneware with Shino glaze, stands four inches high—to very tall: "Even the Centipede," eleven separate unglazed faces stacked on a wooden pole, stands at just under fourteen feet and looks like a totem made from lava rocks or a folksy riff on a Brancusi ladder. Through Jan. 11. (Open Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and weekends, 11 to 5.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART ANNEX SPACE
391 Broadway (212-219-1222)—"Corporate art collection" doesn't quite conjure visions of cutting-edge brilliance, but since its inception, in 1998, the Altoids Curiously Strong Collection has done an impressive job of acquiring work by smart young artists. (Altoids promised the collection, which includes pieces by Barnaby Furnas, Gregory Green, Rachel Harrison, and Julie Mehretu, to the New Museum in 2000.) A greatest-hits selection of works by its now famous alumni is on view, along with this year's acquisitions. New standouts include Patrick Jacobs's wall-mounted fish-eye lens, which peeps into a suggestive dollhouse space, and Wayne White's bizarre alpine scene, which is overpainted with giant letters singing the praises of "Heinies N' Shooters w/Hotties at Hooters." Through Nov. 30. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 7.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—Tim Noble and Sue Webster, a shtick-happy pair of British artists, go Dumpster-diving in the name of art, arranging piles of salvaged trash so that they cast shadows of the artists in silhouette when backlit. The results suggest a cross between the laborious objects of Tom Friedman and the living sculptures of Gilbert and George, with the finesse of neither. Two of these installations are on view in this sparse survey, along with a pair of Vegas-worthy signs (one spells out "Forever," the other flashes "$") and a life-size sculpture portraying the artists as a couple of naked primates. Or, more accurately, cheeky monkeys. Through Jan. 31.

◆

In 1502 Columbus made his fourth voyage from Spain to the New World. Half a millennium later, curator Harald Szeemann revisits that voyage in **"The Real Royal Trip,"** an unfocussed show of twenty young artists from Spain and Latin America (more than half making their New York début). Viewers worried that the show may put a pretty face on the dicier aspects of cultural exchange need only walk through the canine gallows at the entrance, Fernando Sánchez Castillo's sculptural reënactment of a 1980 protest by Peru's Shining Path rebels. Inside the museum, artists tackle everything from fashion (Ana Laura Aláez's video of models made up like Ziggy Stardust, aptly titled "Superficial") to religion (Cristina García Rodero's riveting photographs contrasting voodoo and Catholic rituals) to abstraction (Ernesto Neto's whimsical installation, which suggests a collaboration between Dr. Seuss and Eva Hesse). Through Jan. 5. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

JOHN CHAMBERLAIN
Early works, created when Chamberlain first realized that auto wreckage could be as lyrical as paint. A few smaller works actually have frames, and compared to later, larger pieces, they come off like witty plein-air sketches. Through Dec. 20. (Stone, 113 E. 90th St. 212-987-4997.)

APRIL GORNIK
The American Luminist legacy in painting—those sweeping, brooding, light-drenched, cloud-flecked panoramas favored by Frederick Church and Martin Johnson Heade—exerts a surprisingly contemporary influence, given that the original spirit of Manifest Destiny and of the early conservationist movement is long past. Gornik's big, soft landscapes follow the tradition, giving us lowering skies in the unpeopled desert, over the dreamlike sea, and in tree-dappled meadows. Accompanied by a series of highly finished charcoal studies of trees, the paintings are soothing, the technique impressive. Why such imagery is urgent now, though, is hard to say. Through Nov. 15. (Danese, 41 E. 57th St. 212-223-2227.)

JANET MALCOLM
Could it be that collage—cutting up and juxtaposing bits of print, composing wholes from fragmentary textures—is an inherently apt activity for a writer? Moonlighting in a visual medium, the experimental biographer and journalist turns her hand to tropes from the last century's early decades, composing wistful, witty picture-narratives with materials from the epoch of Freud, Schwitters, and Malevich, a bygone era of handwritten account ledgers, black-and-white advertising, Zip Code-less addresses, and yellowed tissue paper. Through Nov. 26. (Lori Bookstein Fine Art, 50 E. 78th St. 212-439-9605.)

RUTH MARTEN
The medium of egg tempera on panel, which Marten uses for her small paintings of hair, is automatically so beautiful and luminous that it's hard not to appreciate an image made from it. And Marten's chosen motif of curls and flowing tresses depicted in closeup comes laden with psychological, mythological, and aesthetic associations. But the skillfully rendered paintings are merely pretty diversions, with few insights into our fascination with these dead cells that we fuss

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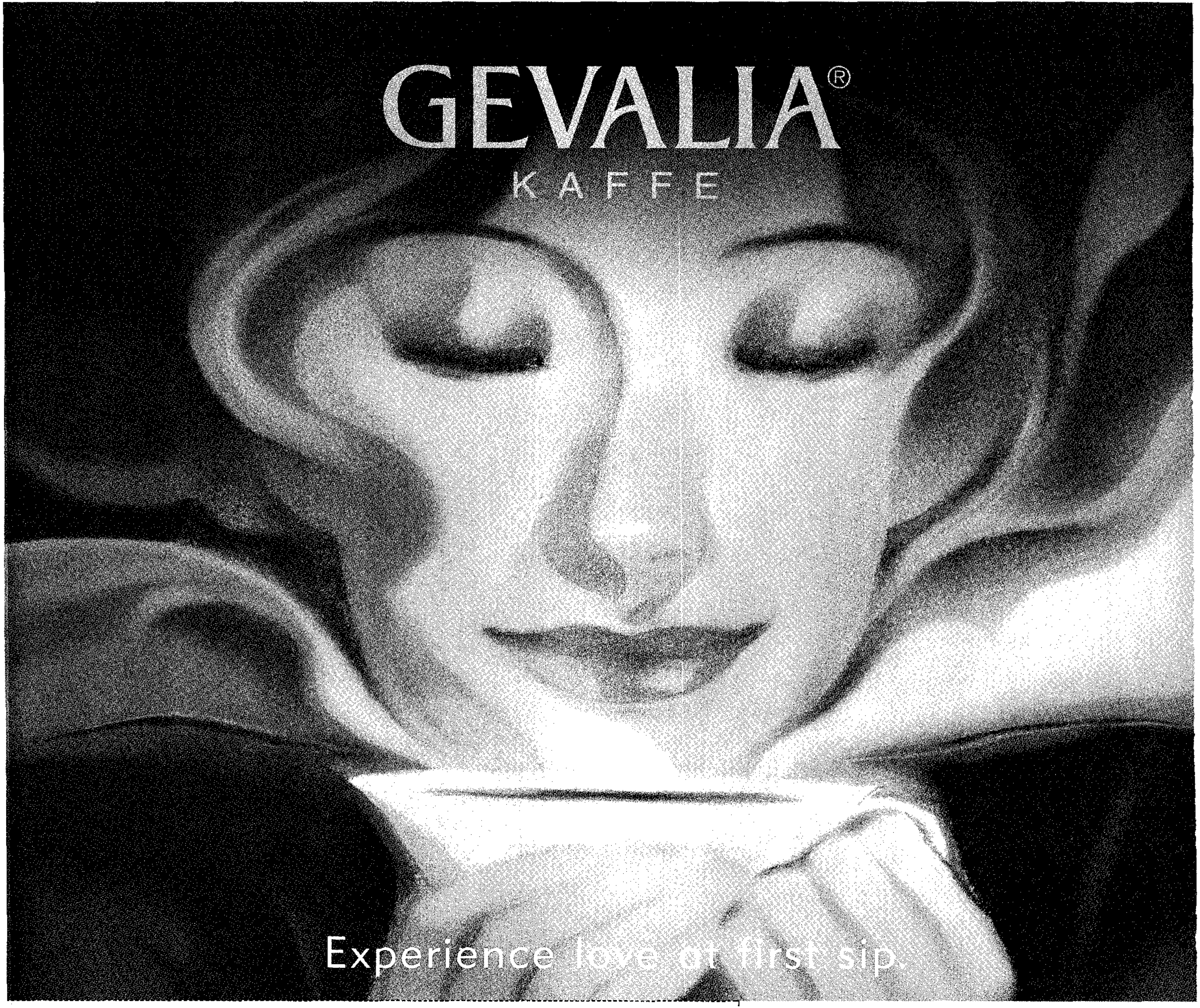
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over, lust after, and adorn. Through Nov. 29. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

GABRIEL OROZCO
The apparently haphazard but poetically balanced assemblage (made from, say, dryer lint, or oranges) is a specialty for Orozco, though on occasion he also presents splashy, highly finished objects (like a Ping-Pong table with a built-in lily pond). His new show falls in between, with abstract sculptures made from lightweight expansion foam. The swooping, arclike shapes, poured and grafted together, suggest wings, bones, bombs, spaceships. A series of finished pieces suspended like mobiles from the ceiling are among the most beautiful things Orozco has made. Two other sets of less resolved and mostly floor-based pieces fail more often than one might wish. Still, the spirit of exuberant experiment flows throughout. Through Nov. 22. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

Short List

GARY BASEMAN
Earl McGrath, 20 W. 57th St. 212-956-3366.
Through Oct. 23.

TABLES FOR TWO

KAI
822 Madison Ave., at 68th St. (212-988-7277)—At the *kaiseki* restaurant upstairs from Ito En, a Japanese tea shop on an otherwise un-Zen stretch of Madison Avenue, the chopstick rests are dewy blobs of molten glass, each table has a small square dish of chartreuse and orange mini-mums, and the placemats are slabs of slate—an allusion, perhaps to the hot stones (*seki*) that Buddhist priests would sometimes place in their pockets (*kai*) for comfort during fasts.

The first cup of tea (jasmine, perfumed but still savory) comes on a coaster made from a dried tea leaf. The food, as they say, is poetry. Tasting menus of five, eight, or ten small courses are named like collections of tanka: "White Peony," "Silver Needle," "Iron Goddess." And with Ito En sponsoring a haiku contest (winning entries are printed on the labels of its bottled green tea), diners may be inspired to compose:

Cherry tomato
in a gelatinous cube—
intimidating.

New Zealand salmon
with a ribbon of white fat:
gone! An orange flash.

A flake of gold leaf
in the rich lily-bulb soup.
Where are we, Ducasse?

Kaiseki is a seasonal cuisine, and late fall is the season for *modori katsuo* (the southward migration of the bonito), so many of the dishes are now being prepared with *dashi*, a broth made from seaweed and bonito. Between courses—thick, tender beef tongue; black cod in a shell of salt, tea leaves, and egg white—homemade tofu, soba noodles, and *shiso*-and-*yuzu*-rind granita are served. The finale, a dessert plate in earth tones, is an exercise in subtlety: a loamy chocolate cake, a green-tea mousse, and a soy-cream mille-feuille, dusted with moss-colored green-tea powder. "It is a very, very, very fine crêpe," one regular was overheard saying to her date. "Eat it with respect." (Open Mondays through Saturdays, for lunch and dinner. Tasting menus $55-$85.)

—*Dana Goodyear*

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

ANNE CHU
Chu's thrown-together-looking, puppetlike figures in wire, fabric, and wood—tribal, medieval, or otherwise quaint in reference—are absurdly enchanting. You expect to find them twee, but you never get around to it. The vigor and surprise of the artist's hand—welding the wire armatures, sewing and embroidering the fabric, carving the wood with little chain saws—generate a mysterious urgency. The figures seem caught in a process of being imagined; they have a future in your thoughts. Presiding high on one wall, a black bronze raven that retains the soft look of its woody origins might, if it could, intone on the show's behalf, "Evermore." Through Dec. 20. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 212-255-1121.)

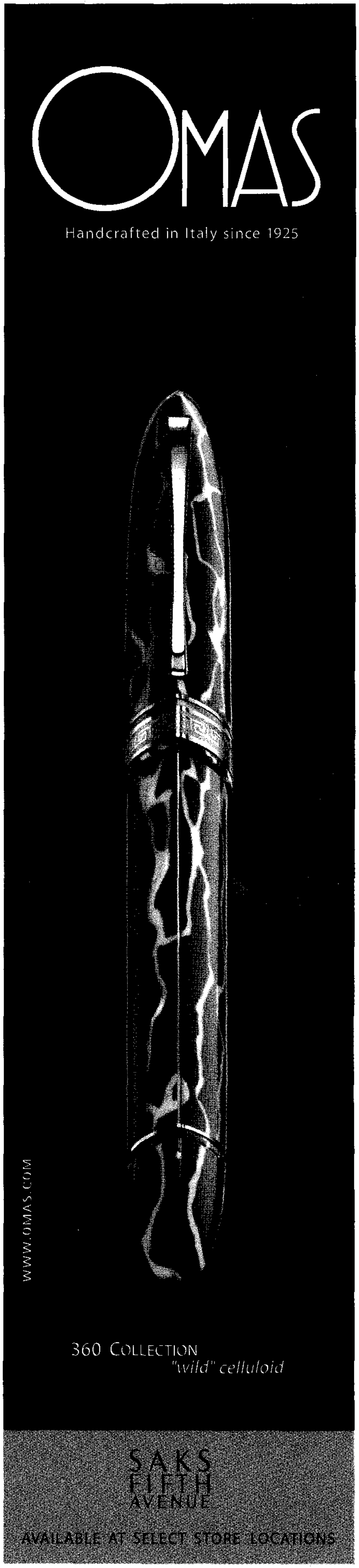
SEONG CHUN
Chun's pieces—constructed paper boxes covered with sleeves of crocheted paper and mobiles made of tiny beads—sound like the stuff of craft fairs. But the artist combines a handiwork aesthetic with an interest in minimalism, seriality, and language: she shreds printed matter to make thread and lays out her delicate, brick-size boxes in a strict grid. The mobiles, meanwhile, look like fragile geodesic domes. Chun favors the merry and tacky colors found in afghans, but her touch with materials is deft enough to compensate. Through Nov. 29. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 212-727-8304.)

JEFF GAUNTT
Treetops morph into clouds and curtains become diaphanous skirts in paintings with the deceptively simple appeal of storybooks. The Abstract Expressionists believed painting belonged to the unconscious; Gauntt's dreamlike works slyly spoof modernist conventions. The scale is monumental, but the subject is intimate; meticulous drips of paint dot the surface in lieu of splatter, and collaged blocks of wood and grooved incisions disrupt otherwise flat pictures. These are distinctly American paintings, born of manicured lawns and suburbia. They intertwine the mundane and the mysterious as masterfully as a movie by David Lynch. Through Nov. 22. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

GEORGE SCHNEEMAN / NANCY MITCHNICK
Two unfairly obscure, veteran American painters. Schneeman's tiny, brushy Tuscan landscapes in egg tempera look ordinary at first glance, but then their thinking touch, tender colors, and absence of fuss find the intimacy in landscapes that have been cultivated (by painters and farmers) for centuries. Mitchnick, well known as a teacher of painting, lately at Harvard, shows acrylics on paper, up to ten feet high, of men, women, and children wearing dresses—from "a sequential project of excessive proportions," in the artist's words. Through Nov. 22. (CUE Art Foundation, 511 W. 25th St. 212-206-0321.)

NANCY SPERO
Spero's "War Series" (1966-70) of violent fantasies in watery gouache and ink on paper, made in reaction to the Vietnam War, here has its first substantial showing in America. The pictures are neurotically tortured and strangely beautiful—classics of Expressionist allegory, as raw and tender as bruised flesh. An overwrought presumption that war expresses male sexuality—couched in imagery of priapic guns, helicopters, and mushroom clouds, randomly slaughtering innocents—proves incidental to the work's emotional nakedness. Through Dec. 6. (Galerie Lelong, 528 W. 26th St. 212-315-0470.)

"MY PEOPLE WERE FAIR AND HAD CUM IN THEIR HAIR"
This exhilarating, if at times exasperating, show features thirty-nine artists—but you could count visionary curator and provocateur Bob Nickas as number forty. Nickas, who appears to have been inspired by the hedonism and the psychedelia of the Summer of Love (the title riffs on a T-Rex album from 1968), anchors the show with work from the sixties and seventies by Jack Smith, Charles Henri Ford, and Peter Hujar. The puerile preoccupation with sex (Michael Meads's photographs of a frat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boy being pleasured by a pumpkin, Terry Richardson's creepy portrait of himself in a compromising position) is offset by aching romance (fragile pencil portraits by Paul P., Roe Ethridge's photograph of a dandelion gone to seed). The showstopper is a Charles Atlas video from 1989, an erotic paean to pattern and decoration. Through Nov. 15. (Team, 527 W. 26th St. 212-279-9219.)

Short List

JESSICA STOCKHOLDER
Gorney Bravin + Lee, 534 W. 26th St.
212-352-8372. Through Nov. 15.
GORDON TERRY
Weiss, 520 W. 24th St. 212-691-6899.
Through Nov. 15.
JOHN WESLEY
Fredericks Freiser, 504 W. 22nd St.
212-633-6555.
Through Nov. 22.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

VITO ACCONCI
The pioneering conceptual artist may be best known for masturbating under the entrance ramp to a SoHo gallery in 1972 (a seminal work if ever there was one), but in the eighties his interest turned to architecture. Here early models, furniture, and sketches are paired with seven photo-text works from the early seventies, no doubt included to reveal Acconci's early preoccupation with bodies in space. One whimsical architectural model transforms a beached whale into a housing unit. Through Dec. 14. (Schachter/Rove, 132 Perry St. 212-807-6669.)

"AMERICAN CUTOUT"
This lively and intelligent show of cutouts and collage, organized by the British curator David Cohen, plays favorites; more than a third of the thirty-six works are by either Alex Katz or Ellsworth Kelly. Katz's freestanding portrait of Frank O'Hara is so convincing that viewers may feel they're being shadowed. On a nearby wall, a pair of Wesselmann lips part for a voluptuous curl of smoke. Motherwell, de Kooning, and Krasner are on hand, as are the lesser-known Judith Rothschild and Irving Kriesberg, the latter in an Ellsworth Kelly palette of red, green, and blue. Against such strong mid-century material, an anonymous weather vane, from 1876, and a diminutive Kara Walker painting, from 1995, read more like afterthoughts than historical bookends. Through Nov. 22. (The New York Studio School, 8 W. 8th St. 212-673-6466.)

Short List

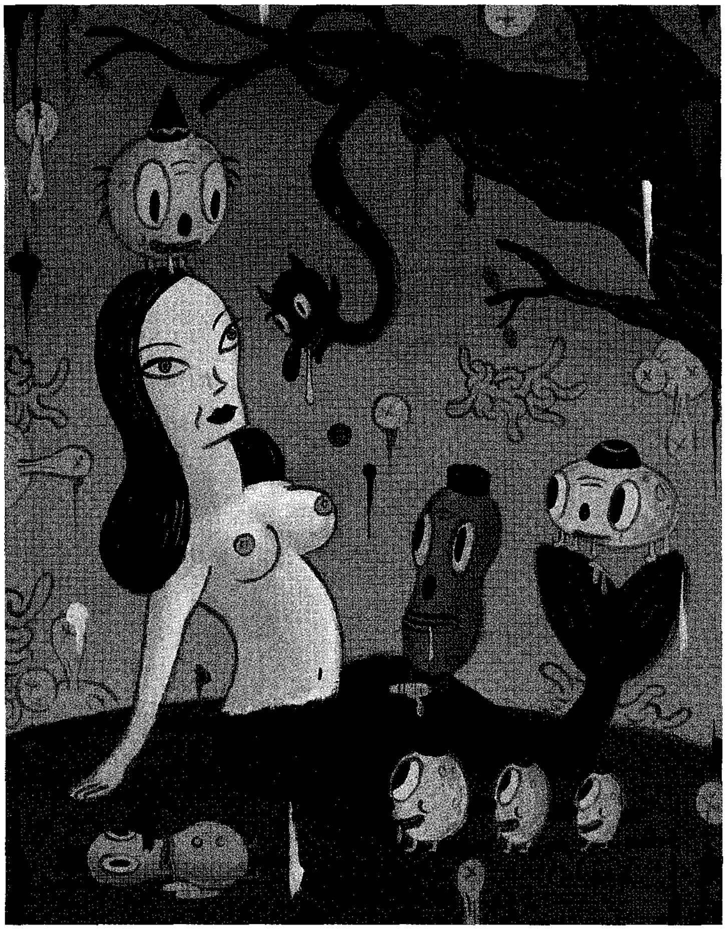
ALEX KATZ
Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.
Through Nov. 15.
RICHARD MERKIN
Wickiser, 568 Broadway. 212-941-1817.
Through Nov. 29.

GALLERIES—BROOKLYN

JOE AMRHEIN
It's easy to mock egghead artspeak. Joe Amrhein, however, pulls off something trickier: he wittily repackages silly phrases from *Artforum* and the rest in a way that deflates the gasbaggery and makes you think. Amrhein, who trained as a sign painter, renders the nuggets in a variety of typefaces and colors on overlapped Mylar panels or prints them on glass so that the words read as cast shadows. "Deadpan, slightly cryptic, and unexpectedly romantic," one remarks. Another says, "We saw a series of things on the walls and floor that we were tempted to call art." Through Nov. 17. (Roebling Hall, 390 Wythe Ave. 718-599-5352.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

JAMES CASEBERE
The claustrophobia-inducing interiors of a palazzo in Siena, a Spanish bath, and a red wallpapered parlor are filled with water and are disorientingly beautiful. The flooded rooms in the large photographs (some six feet by eight feet) aren't really rooms, of course, but table-size architectural models awash in a clear resin and meticulously lit. An arched tunnel and a series of minimalist spaces with geometric windows are austere by comparison, but all the interiors shimmer in the diffuse light. Through Dec. 6. (Kelly, 528 W. 29th St. 212-239-1181.)



"Adoration of a Muse," by Gary Baseman, at Earl McGrath.

ADAM FUSS
This thoughtful show includes a roomful of small black-and-white and color photographs of Fuss, from infancy to age eleven, mounted on the sort of enamel plaques that are used on Russian gravestones. They announce the theme of metamorphosis, which culminates in another room in the gallery with blown-up images of butterfly chrysalides. In between is a haunting series of daguerreotypes of human skulls, the surfaces of which are mesmerizing. Each silvery surface is so reflective that while viewing the memento mori you gaze at your own face. Through Nov. 15. (Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727.)

NIKKI S. LEE
Lee is nominally the photographer of her work, although the pictures are taken by an assistant, since Lee is also the subject, and it's hard to be in two places at once. In earlier projects, she assumed the identity of a senior citizen, an East Village punk, a lesbian, a Latina homegirl, and a dark-skinned hip-hop diva. For her new large-scale color prints Lee staged quiet scenes in which she does things like ride in the back of a taxi, visit an aquarium, and stand on a rock overlooking a wooded vista. She chopped the prints in half, eliminating her companions, traces of whom remain in disembodied hands or fragments of a leg or a tattooed and bandaged arm. Through Dec. 20. (Tonkonow, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-255-8450.)

WOLFGANG TILLMANS
Like William Eggleston and Gary Winogrand, Tillmans makes photographs that don't seem to be about much—old socks balled up on a couch, a still-life of blue plums and a yellow tomato, a red carpeted stairway—but they are curiously subversive, not least because of the way he hangs them: taped to the gallery walls in a consciously haphazard manner, with "snapshots" of young people dancing and smiling for the camera next to a dazzling picture of gold bars, a series of aerial snowscapes, and two huge pinkish-red inkjet prints made by manipulating light on photographic paper. These abstractions could be some hidden body part. Are those delicate black lines hairs? Through Dec. 6. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 212-627-6000.)

Short List

TOM HUNTER
Yancey Richardson,
535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610.
Through Nov. 29.
BILL JACOBSON
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St.
212-627-2410.
Through Nov. 29.
SALLY MANN
Houk, 745 Fifth Ave.
212-750-7070.
Through Nov. 15.
MICHAEL MARTONE
Ricco/Maresca, 529 W. 20th St.
212-627-4819.
Through Nov. 22.
WILLIAM HENRY FOX TALBOT
Kraus, at the Mark Hotel,
25 E. 77th St. 212-794-2064.
Through Nov. 21.
"FACES"
Sepia, 148 W. 24th St.
212-645-9444. Through Nov. 22.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Nov. 12 at 7: A sale of contemporary art that is as wide-ranging in scope as the media exploited by its featured artists. Andy Warhol's "Oxidation Painting," for instance, is an earth-colored abstraction that reached chemical maturity only after Warhol's friend Victor Hugo urinated on the canvas. But the painting's scatological history is of secondary importance, since it supplies the connective tissue between the geometric reductions of such works as Mark Rothko's "No. 8 (White Stripe)" and Agnes Martin's "Leaves" and the fantastic ambiguities of Willem de Kooning's "Spike's Folly I" and Arshile Gorky's "Portrait of Y.D." ♦ Nov. 13 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: The contemporary-art sale concludes with two further sessions including works by such artists as Gerhard Richter, Keith Haring, and Louise Bourgeois. ♦ Nov.

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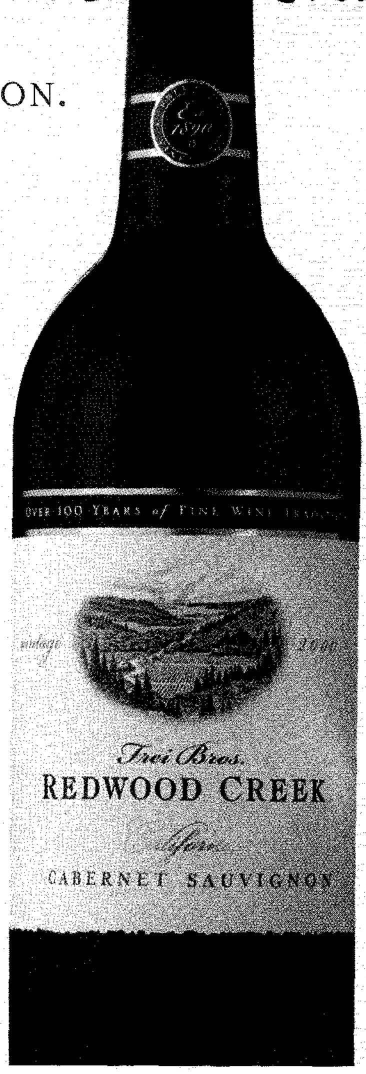
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14 at 10:15 A.M.: African and Oceanic art. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

CHRISTIE'S

Nov. 18 at 10 A.M. and 2: Here's looking at entertainment-industry detritus—director Michel Curtiz's 1942 Academy Award for "Casablanca," handwritten lyrics by John Lennon, a rare letter by Walt Disney, and a range of other memorabilia. ♦ Nov. 18 at 7 and Nov. 19 at 10 A.M.: A tormented self-portrait by Frida Kahlo is the centerpiece of the house's Latin-American sale, complemented by Matta's psychologically complex abstractions and Carrington's surrealist visions, among other works by the region's storied artists. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

DOYLE

Nov. 18 at 10 A.M.: An auction of American furniture, paintings, decorations, and prints. (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.)

SWANN

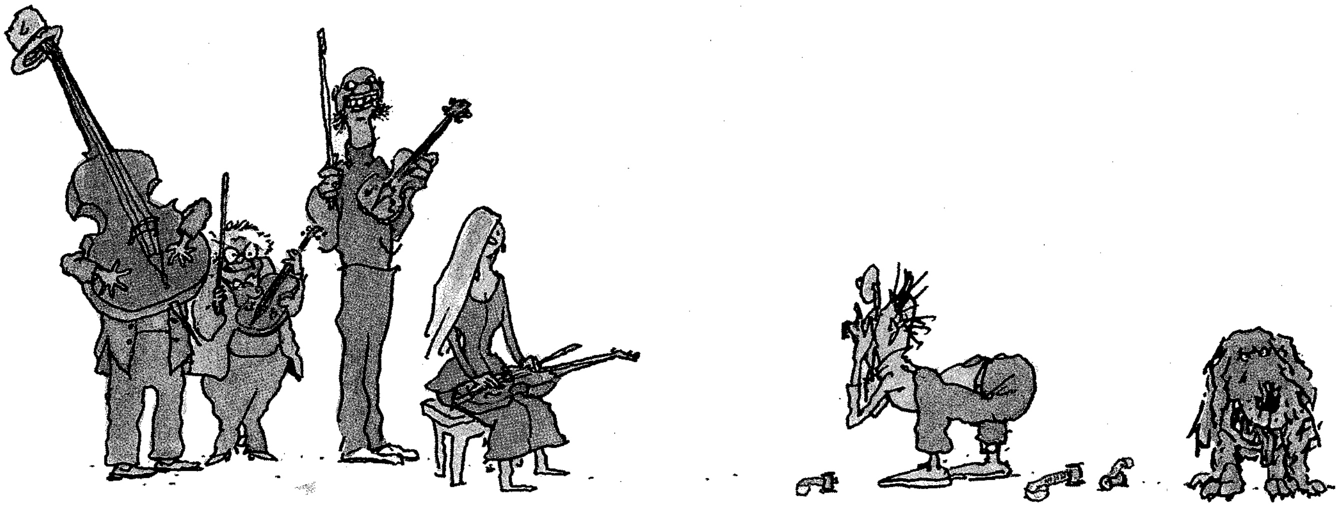
Nov. 13 at 10:30 A.M.: Love between a Salinas railway hand and a local madam turns to bitterness, then violence, in an unpublished play by John Steinbeck—one of the marquee items in an extensive auction of ephemera that features inscriptions by legendary figures from Bonaparte to Babe Ruth. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

MODERNISM

Sixty-nine dealers offer an unrivalled selection of twentieth-century design. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 212-777-5218. Nov. 13-16.)

TRIPLE PIER ANTIQUES SHOW

The chief distinction of Triple Pier would be its claim to hold the city's most fabulous antique show (reputedly a celebrity magnet), offering items by six hundred dealers—though this year's twentieth-anniversary edition also features swing dancing, a collectors' contest, and an exhibit of, among other items, historical binoculars, handkerchiefs, and Art Deco radios. (Piers 90, 92, and 94, Twelfth Ave. between 51st and 55th Sts. 212-255-0020. Nov. 15-16.)



The Elements String Quartet offers "Snapshots"—a collection of miniatures inspired by their composers' personal photos—on Nov. 18.

GEORGE BOOTH

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA

"**La Bohème**," with Cristina Gallardo-Domas, Emily Pulley, Vincenzo La Scola, and Mariusz Kwiecien; Daniel Oren conducts. (Nov. 12 and Nov. 18 at 8 and Nov. 15 at 1:30.) ♦ "**Il Barbiere di Siviglia**," with Susanne Mentzer, Antonio Siragusa, Russell Braun, and John Del Carlo; Bruno Campanella. (Nov. 13 at 7:30.) ♦ The Met has front-loaded its fall schedule with most of the season's novelties, perhaps none more tantalizing than Halévy's "**La Juive**," a majestically lyrical, if shamelessly sensational, melodrama in the mold of "Il Trovatore." Once a staple of the Romantic repertory, the work became operatic poison in the wake of the Holocaust; the Met's first performance since the 1935-36 season is a striking production from the Vienna State Opera, with the aristocratically elegant Soile Isokoski in the title role and the stentorian Neil Shicoff as her father, Eléazar. Elizabeth Futral, Eric Cutler, and Ferruccio Furlanetto are also featured; Marcello Viotti conducts. (Nov. 14 at 8.) ♦ Ruth Ann Swenson is Violetta in "**La Traviata**," leading a cast that also features the tenor Rolando Villazon (a wonderful new Alfredo) and the baritone Dwayne Croft; Paul Nadler. (Nov. 15 at 8.) ♦ Herbert Wernicke's magical 2001 production of Strauss and Hofmannsthal's "**Die Frau Ohne Schatten**," a grandiose fairy-tale opera about the complexities of stolen fertility, returns with its original star, Deborah Voigt, whose sumptuous singing is enough to make you ignore the opera's absurd dramaturgy. Deborah Polaski is the Dyer's Wife, Julia Juon (in her début) is the Nurse, and Richard Margison and Wolfgang Brendel are the heroically hapless men in their lives; Philippe Auguin. (Nov. 17 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

NEW YORK CITY OPERA

City Opera's longtime production of "**Turandot**," a shrewd and colorful testament to the virtues of economy, manages to provide abundant spectacle without a lot of expensive clutter to upstage its excellent cast. This welcome return features Lori Phillips, a young powerhouse soprano, as Turandot, Oksana Krovytska as Liù, Philip Webb as Calaf, and Seth Malkin as Timur; George Manahan conducts. (Nov. 12 at 7:30.) ♦ With Patricia Stevens replacing Phillips. (Nov. 14 at 8.) ♦ "**Don Pasquale**," a traditional production featuring Angela Turner Wilson, Bruce Sledge, Michael Chioldi, and Peter Strummer (in the title role); Manahan. (Nov. 13 at 7:30 and Nov. 16 at 1:30.) ♦ "**Carmen**," with Jessie Raven, Melanie Vaccari, David Corman, and Michael Chioldi; Gary Thor Wedow conducts. (Nov. 15 at 1:30.) ♦ A (mostly) new cast steps into Jonathan Miller's rollicking production of "**The Mikado**," including Tonna Miller, Kathryn Cowdrick, William Ferguson, Richard Suart, and Jan Opalach; Gerald Steichen. (Nov. 15 at 1:30.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)

AMATO OPERA: "IL TROVATORE"

Anthony Amato directs and conducts Verdi's melodrama, staged in the company's cozy matchbox theatre on the Lower East Side. (Amato Opera Theatre, 319 Bowery, at 2nd St. 212-228-8200. Nov. 14-15 at 7:30 and Nov. 16 at 2:30. Through Nov. 23.)

NINE CIRCLES CHAMBER THEATRE: "THE VOICE OF THE VIOLIN"

This offbeat, string-centric company (Jonathan Levi and Gil Morgenstern, its artistic directors, are both violinists) brings musicians and actors together in dramatic dialogues fuelled by literary classics—such as poetry by Dante and Akhmatova, which forms the basis of a new production of "musical storytelling" featuring contributions by Morgenstern, the singers Michaela Martens and Randall Scarlata, and the pianist Margo Garrett. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. Nov. 13-14 at 8. 212-864-5400.)

JUILLIARD OPERA CENTER: "ORESTE"

The male soprano Michael Maniaci, whose sweet voice and heroic temperament shone in last summer's "Orlando" at Glimmerglass, takes the title role in what is billed as the American première of Handel's 1734 opera, a pastiche made from selections from his other works. Lillian Groag directs; Daniel Beckwith, a specialist in Baroque repertory, conducts. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. 212-769-7406. Nov. 12 and Nov. 14 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 2.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC

When Colin Davis emerged as a major Berlioz interpreter in the sixties, his stylish, limber, and flawlessly paced performances had some invigorating competition from the likes of Beecham, Bernstein, and Munch. In a less abundant age, Davis's gifts seem all the more rare—and any occasion that finds him leading the composer's eternally electrifying music is a major event. Here he joins the mezzo-soprano Monica Groop and the Westminster Symphonic Choir in a concert that includes not only popular works ("Royal Hunt and Storm," from "Les Troyens") but also the Philharmonic premières of several vocal rarities ("Tristia," "Herminie," and "Sara la Baigneuse"). (Nov. 13 at 7:30 and Nov. 14-15 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

BERLIN PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

This orchestra used to move with a kind of glacial poise for the autocratic Herbert von Karajan, but it's now an amazingly youthful ensemble that has added an infectious energy to its lustrous, bass-rich sound. A lot of credit for that goes to its latest music director, Simon Rattle, who leads the group's first Carnegie Hall appearances since the unforgettable concerts conducted by Claudio Abbado in the days after 9/11. Nov. 12 at 8: Of all György Ligeti's splendid recent pieces, his Violin Concerto—mysterious and rhythmically alive—seems most likely to head for repertory status. Tasmin Little plays it as the centerpiece of a program that also includes music by Bartók and Beethoven (the "Pastoral" Symphony). ♦ Nov. 13 at 8: Haydn's Symphonies Nos. 88 and 90 bookend Debussy's "La Mer" and Henri Dutilleux's "Correspondances" (the American première, with the soprano Valdine Anderson). ♦ Nov. 14 at 8: The daring theatrical composer Heiner Goebbels's "From a Diary," another American première, leads off a final concert of Si-

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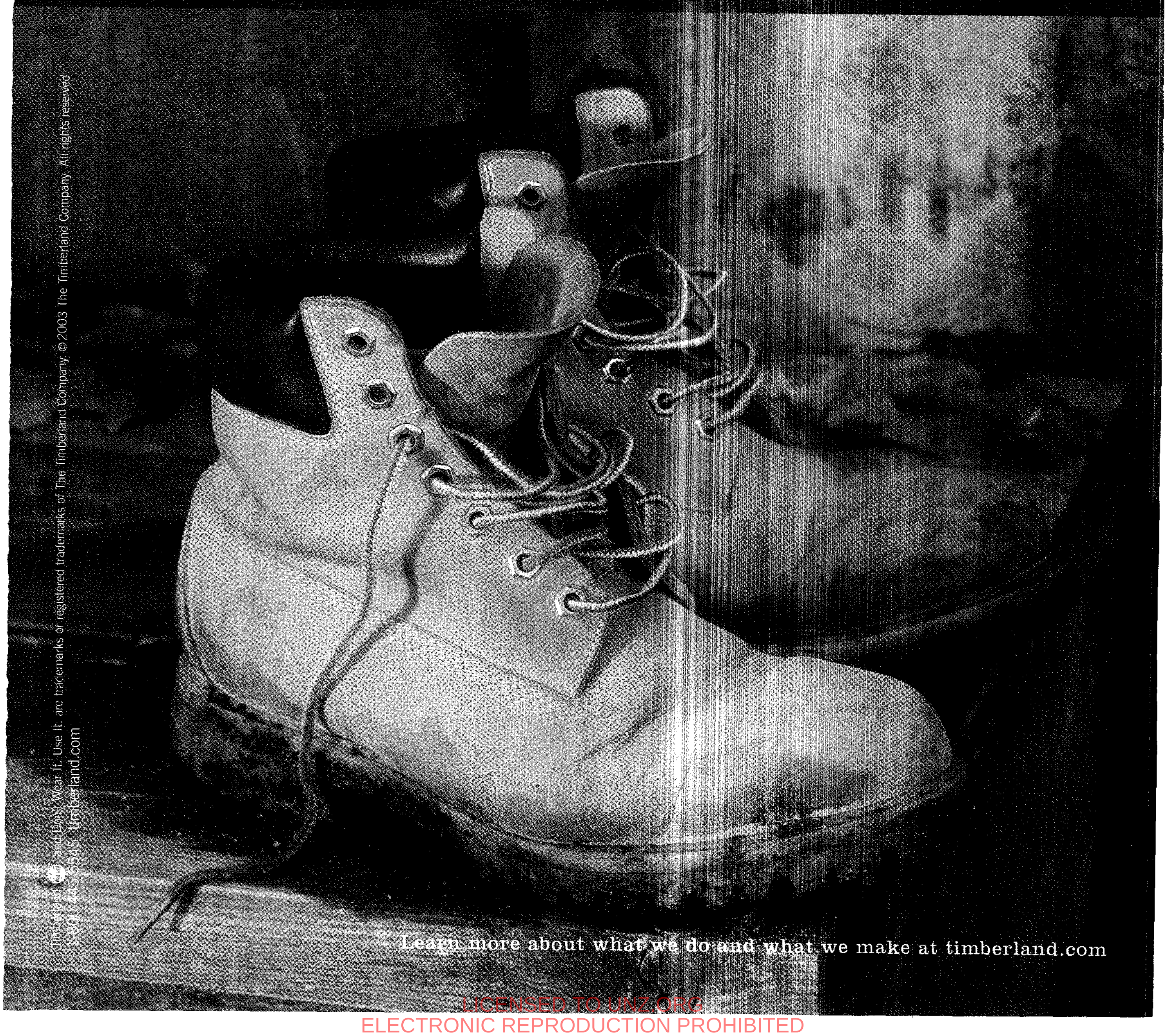

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belius (the Symphony No. 7) and Schubert (the Symphony No. 9, "The Great"). (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

EOS ORCHESTRA: "IMAGE/SOUND/IMAGE"
The orchestra, which puts a premium on novelty, makes its Zankel Hall début with a program featuring film suites by its conductor, Jonathan Sheffer ("In a Shallow Grave"), and Philip Glass ("The Hours"), along with the New York première of Glass's Concerto for Harpsichord and Orchestra (with Paolo Michele Bordignon). The ambitious grand finale is a performance of Schubert's Symphony No. 2, its four movements accompanied by videos by the artists Brandon Smith, Janaina Tschape, Leo Villareal, and Sam Taylor-Wood. (212-247-7800. Nov. 13 at 7:30.)

EARLY MUSIC NEW YORK
Frederick Renz's ensemble performs vocal and instrumental works by two polyphonic masters, Lassus and Palestrina, in the St. James Chapel, a more intimate space amid the cavernous vaults of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. (Amsterdam Ave. at 112th St. 212-280-0330. Nov. 13 at 8 and Nov. 16 at 3.)

PAULA ROBISON: "THE GREAT VIVALDI"
The flutist, along with a chamber orchestra, offers a selection of the composer's concertos and sinfonias at the Temple of Dendur. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 14 at 7.)

NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE ORCHESTRA
Pinchas Zukerman, the longtime conductor of the Canadian ensemble, conducts music by Rossini, Denys Bouliane (the New York première of "Snow Is White But Water Is Black"), and Mozart (the "Jupiter" Symphony and the Violin Concerto No. 5, with Zukerman handling the solo part as well). (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 16 at 3.)

RECITALS

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
It's no accident that the Orion String Quartet has been in residence with the Society for ten years: their performances are passionate conversations between equal partners who couldn't care less about glamming up their sound. The group's first concert of the season features quartets by Prokofiev (No. 1 in B Minor, a rarity), Beethoven (the "Harp," Op. 74), and Schubert (No. 14, "Death and the Maiden"). (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788. Nov. 12 at 8.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG: "LOST TRIBES OF VAUDEVILLE"
The worlds of Jewish and African-American vaudeville—two great genres that go great together—are the themes for the festival's latest concert, which celebrates the work of such masters as Irving Berlin, W. C. Handy, Harold Arlen, Abraham Ellstein, and Duke Ellington. Their songs are sung by Lachanze, Judy Kaye, Bruce Adler, James Martin, and Darius de Haas; Steven Blier, at the piano, will dispense his usual doses of witty repartee. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 12 at 8.)

BARGEMUSIC
Nov. 13-14 at 7:30: The cellist Edward Arron and the pianist Jeremy Denk play Stravinsky's "Suite Italienne" (music adapted from his ballet "Pulcinella") along with cello sonatas by Shostakovich and Rachmaninoff. ♦ Nov. 15 at 7:30 and Nov. 16 at 4: A concert of Schubert violin sonatas with the violinist Mark Peskanov and the pianist Steven Beck (as well as Brahms's Four Piano Pieces, Op. 119, for which Beck has the stage to himself). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MENDELSSOHN STRING QUARTET
The quartet, an exceptional American group that has settled into its middle-aged prime, offers a nicely balanced program of Haydn, William Bolcom (the New York première of his Quartet No. 11), and Beethoven (the third "Razumovsky" Quartet, in C Major). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Nov. 14 at 7:30.)

COMPOSERS' CONCORDANCE
Music for winds, percussion, and guitar is the focus of the new-music collective's latest concert, highlighted by works by both established composers (Bernard Rands's "Memo 8," for solo oboe, played by the lively oboist Jacqueline LeClair) and newcomers (Aaron Friedman and Susan Harding). (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. Nov. 14 at 8. Tickets at the door.)

ROULETTE
Ned Rothenberg and New Winds (featuring the flutist Robert Dick, the James Galway of the downtown set) shares the bill with an avant-jazz combo headed by the saxophonist Daniel Carter, highlighting a new series of concerts presented by the experimental-music center (which is scheduling its activities in several new venues this season). For a complete schedule of events, see www.roulette.org. (Location One, 26 Greene St. 212-219-8242. Nov. 14 at 8:30.)

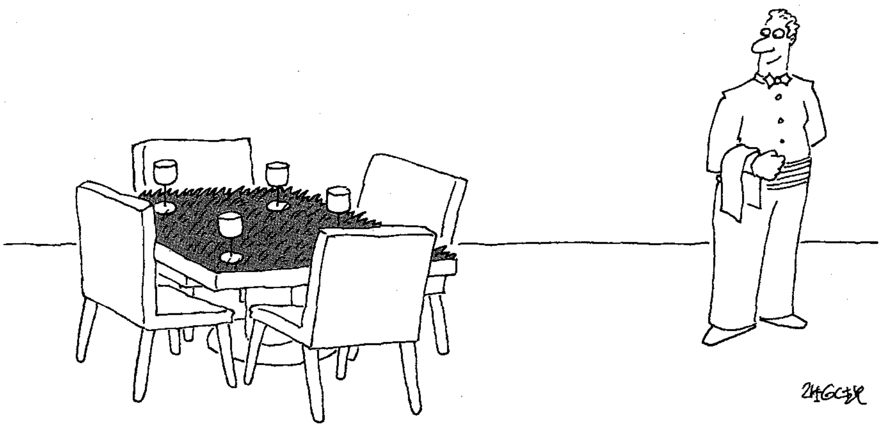
MITSUKO UCHIDA AND FRIENDS
The pianist continues her explorations of music from both the First and Second Viennese Schools, a repertory that she plays with uncommon lucidity and grace; a number of exceptional young performers (including the Brentano String Quartet) share the stage with her in the first installments of a four-concert series. Nov. 15 at 7:30: Piano music by Schubert (the "Moments Musicaux"), along with string trios by Mozart and Schoenberg. ♦ Nov. 17 at 7:30: The tenor Ian Bostridge joins Uchida for Schubert's "Die Schöne Müllerin" in a concert that begins with Berg's "Lyric Suite," for string quartet. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

GUARNERI STRING QUARTET
The eminent foursome, celebrating its fortieth-anniversary year, continues its season of Beethoven concerts with the Quartets in D Major, Op. 18, No. 3; in F Minor, the "Serioso"; and in A Minor, Op. 132. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949. Nov. 15 at 8.)

KRONOS QUARTET: "VISUAL MUSIC"
Concerts fusing new music with extravagant visual accompaniment are becoming a regular feature around the city—especially at the new Zankel Hall, which offers more state-of-the-art technology than any other venue. Kronos makes its own contribution with this program, in which music by Reich, Zorn (the inevitable "Cat o' Nine Tails"), Nancarrow, Bernard Hermann (an excerpt from "The Day the Earth Stood Still"), Sigur Rós, and other musicians is married to video creations by Larry Springer, Catherine Owens, and Willie Williams. (212-247-7800. Nov. 16 at 7:30.)

GIL SHAHAM
The violinist brings his refulgent sound and youthful brio to music by Copland, Bach, and Fauré (including the Sonata No. 1 in A Major). Akira Eguchi is at the piano. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Nov. 18 at 8.)

ELEMENTS STRING QUARTET: "SNAPSHOTS"
Here's an idea: get a gaggle of composers from across the stylistic spectrum (John Corigliano, Angelo Badalamenti, David Del Tredici, Sebastian Currier, Regina Carter, et al.) to pick photographs from their own collections as the inspiration for miniature string-quartet tone poems. There's no better group for the job than the Elements, who can move from Bach to Zorn without missing a beat; the photographs will be crafted into a video montage by the Broadway projection artist Wendall K. Harrington. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 212-501-3330. Nov. 18 at 8.)



Great Grasses Day, at the bucolic Bronx cultural institution Wave Hill.

JACK ZIEGLER

ABOVE AND BEYOND

GREAT GRASSES DAY
Juanita Velasco, a Mayan educator from the National Museum of the American Indian, joins the horticulturalist John Beirne for a family-oriented afternoon at Wave Hill that celebrates ornamental and edible grasses. Velasco will grind one of the most common domesticated grasses—corn—and Beirne will lead a tour of the gardens, pointing out which slender stems can be eaten and which ones cannot. If you get hungry, hot tamales will be available. (249th St. at Independence Ave., the Bronx. 718-549-3200. Nov. 15 from 1 to 4.)

READINGS
Nov. 12 at 7:30: The writers Sherman Alexie, Philip Levine, and Grace Paley gather at a benefit for Poetry in Motion, which puts verse on subways and buses. (National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. For more information, call 212-254-9628.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 7:30: The short-story writers Gabe Hudson and Nell Freudenberger read from their work. (Barbès, 376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn. 718-965-9177.) ♦ Nov. 18 at 7:30: Samuel Menashe and Yerra Sugarman read their poetry. (The Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 W. 86th St. Tickets at the door.)

TALKS
Nov. 12 at 7:30: Charles Barron, a New York City councilman and former Black Panther, discusses "Faith of Our Fathers: An Examination of the Spiritual Life of African and African-American People," the latest book by the journalist and death-row inmate Mumia Abu-Jamal. (Brecht Forum, 122 W. 27th St. 212-242-4201.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 6: The natural-history painter and marine expert Richard Ellis offers an illustrated lecture on his new book, "The Empty Ocean." (Lighthouse, 111 E. 59th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Nov. 13 at 7: Nell Irvin Painter, a history professor at Princeton, moderates a discussion about America today, with Maureen Howard, Luc Sante, Annie Proulx, and other authors. John Leonard, the editor of "These United States: Original Essays by Leading American Writers on Their State Within the Union," is the host. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, Third Ave. at 7th St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-209-5442.)

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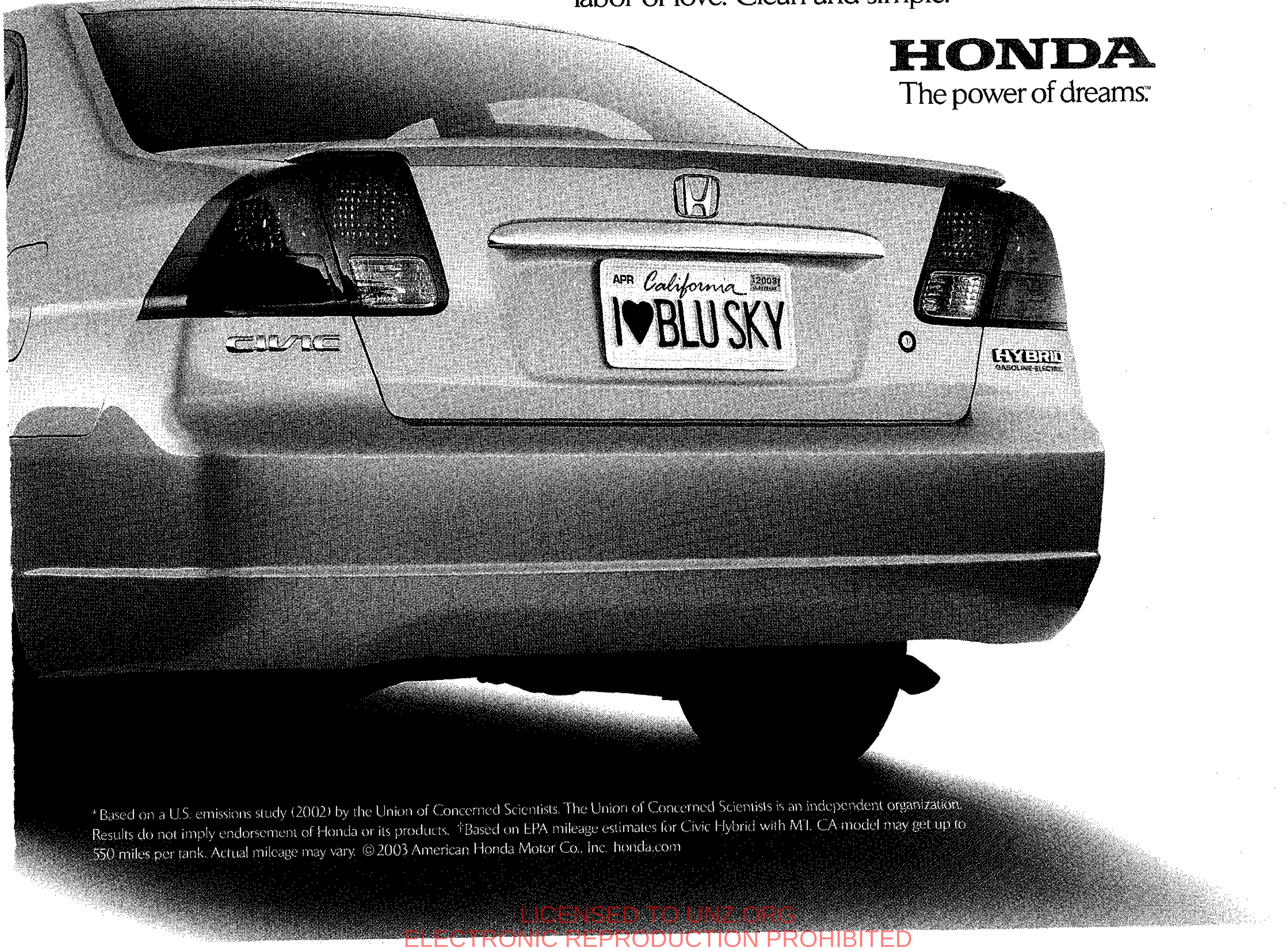

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MOVIES OPENING

A HOUSE ON A HILL
A drama directed by Chuck Workman about a cranky, almost retired architect (Philip Baker Hall) who agrees to finish a dream house for a young couple. With Laura San Giacomo as a filmmaker documenting the construction. Opening Nov. 14.

LOONEY TUNES: BACK IN ACTION
Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, Porky Pig, and other characters appear in an adventure story that mixes animation and live actors. The cast includes Brendan Fraser, Jenna Elfman, and Steve Martin. Directed by Joe Dante. Opening Nov. 14.

MASTER AND COMMANDER: THE FAR SIDE OF THE WORLD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Nov. 14.

MY ARCHITECT
Nathaniel Kahn directed this documentary about the double life of his father, the architect Louis Kahn. Opening Nov. 12. (Film Forum.)

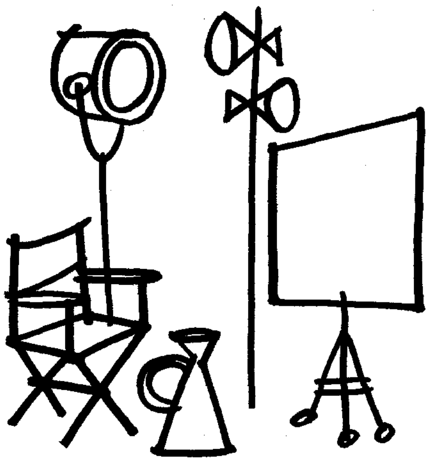
TUPAC: RESURRECTION
A documentary about the hip-hop star, whose 1996 murder remains unsolved. Directed by Lauren Lazin. Opening Nov. 14.

FILM NOTES

BEYOND BORDERS
The charismatic Clive Owen is Nick Callahan, a surgeon who ministers to the world's mangled poor and makes impassioned speeches to everyone. He's paired with Angelina Jolie, playing Sarah Jordan, a married woman in London who keeps following the fiery doctor to ravaged spots like Ethiopia, Cambodia, and Chechnya. Jolie, her black hair draped around her neck—she seems to be in mourning for her career—purses those enormous lips, and her performance comes lethally close to parody. There is evidence that at some point this project may have been serious, but the director, Martin Campbell, has produced little more than a churning, vivid backdrop for romance.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 11/10/03.) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

LA DOLCE VITA
Federico Fellini shows off his gifts for atmosphere and image making in this 1959 moralistic extravaganza about "the sweet life" in Rome. In the course of the nearly three-hour movie, a society journalist named Marcello (Marcello Mastroianni) abandons literary ambition and becomes a publicist. He's not a strong enough antihero to clarify Fellini's most prophetic and compelling theme—the blurring of public and private life. Still, there are some astonishing things here: the statue of Christ being hauled across Rome by a helicopter while bikinied beauties wave to Jesus, bits of a satiric yet dreamy episode involving Anita Ekberg as a Swedish-American sex goddess, and the whole sequence of Marcello taking his father to an archaic night club (apparently, glitz must fade before Fellini can find poetry in it). The enormous cast includes Anouk Aimée, Alain Cuny, and Walter Santesso, whose photographer character, Paparazzo, gave the name to celebrity-chasing photojournalists. In Italian.—*Michael Sragow* (Guggenheim; Nov. 15.)

ELEPHANT
Gus Van Sant's fascinating, mysterious, semidocumentary meditation on the Columbine massacre is not very satisfying, but it's still something to see. Van Sant and his cameraman, Harris Savides, gently but persistently pad after one student and then another at a nameless school, photographing casual encounters from various points of view. The multiple versions of the same trivial event suggest the utter contingency of the disaster: one teen-ager turns in a certain direction and avoids the killers, two others do not. For Van Sant, what matters is the dailiness of school social life—gossip, flirtations, hazing—in which time and sequence count less than states of being. He punctuates the banal school scenes with beautiful shots of scudding clouds and a darkening sky, as if all of eternity were contained in a passing moment when children die.—*D.D.* (10/27/03) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



THE HUMAN STAIN
Robert Benton, the maker of such muted films as "Nobody's Fool," has now turned his attention to the somewhat louder material of Philip Roth, whose infuriated tale of love in the age of Kenneth Starr was published in 2000. Anthony Hopkins is Coleman Silk, born black, but pale of skin, who, with smarting irony, is hounded from his post as a professor of classics for an allegedly racist remark. His lover, who sweeps floors and milks cows for a living, is played by Nicole Kidman, whose bearing, unfortunately for Benton, becomes more aristocratic with every passing film. The miscasting is completed by Gary Sinise, who takes the part of Nathan Zuckerman, one of Roth's roster of stand-ins. The result is calm, wintry, and plaintive—in other words, a world away from the novel. That is no crime, but Benton's decorous approach leaves the movie floundering in implausibilities. With Wentworth Miller as the younger (and more compelling) Silk.—*Anthony Lane* (11/3/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, Empire 25, and Lincoln Square.)

IN THE CUT
A Manhattan-set art thriller of the worst kind, with harsh, high-contrast lighting, a jiggling camera, and a version of "Que Será, Será" that sounds neurotic rather than defiant. Meg Ryan is Frannie, the lonely, lost girl in the big city who is menaced by a mad killer but puts her trust in a sexy cop (Mark Ruffalo) who may or may not be the murderer. Ryan has dyed her hair light-brown in an apparent homage to the smart, masochistic character that Jane Fonda played in the 1971 thriller "Klute." She's also bravely naked in a few scenes, but she doesn't have the range and power to make us overlook what's tiresome in Frannie's character—essentially a ninny wandering through a maelstrom. Directed by Jane Campion, who worked with the novelist Susanna Moore on the adaptation of Moore's 1995 novel.—*D.D.* (10/27/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sunshine Cinema, and 34th Street Theatre.)

INTOLERABLE CRUELTY
Waggling his eyebrows and smiling broadly, George Clooney does some of his most self-confident acting yet as a sharp Los Angeles divorce lawyer, and Catherine Zeta-Jones is suitably deadpan as a voracious beauty who marries wealthy men and then finds spurious reasons to dump them and take their money. As these two lock horns, this Coen-brothers movie seems, for a while, to be the kind of glossy, high-style dialogue comedy from the forties that both celebrated and satirized heartless people with a gift for gab. But then the Coens fall into their usual goony-bird comedy games, and, though some of the jokes are funny, they are funny at a much lower level. Geoffrey Rush has a good bit at the beginning as a Hollywood sleaze who likes to sing along with his car radio.—*D.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

I VITELLONI
Frustrated small-town boys with big ideas, the central characters are sons of indulgent, middle-class families, who cadge off their parents, loaf, and dream of women, riches, and glory. Their energies are wasted in idiotic pursuits; whatever dreams or ideals they have are pathetically childish or rotten. The director, Federico Fellini, observes the farce of their lives without condescension; his tone is satirical, yet warm and accepting—the distinctive Fellini tone, in his first fully confident piece of direction. Originally released in 1953. In Italian.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; Nov. 14-18.)

KAGEMUSHA
An epic film in color by Kurosawa, from 1980, set during the wars of the clans in seventeenth-century Japan (the period just before the country was unified). Kurosawa seems to be saying that wisdom dictates caution, security, stasis, but that to be alive is to be subject to impulse, to chaos. The film's style is ceremonial rather than dramatic; it's not battle that Kurosawa is interested in here but formations in battle regalia. He appears to see war as a part of the turmoil of life, and he asks us simply to observe what he shows us. Perhaps he thinks that this way the horror will reach us at a deeper level. But he's also in love with the aesthetics of warfare—he's a schoolboy setting up armies of perfect soldiers and smiling at the patterns he has devised. These two sets of feelings may have neutralized "Kagemusha"—put it at a remove and made it somewhat abstract. In Japanese.—*P.K.* (Thalia Theatre; Nov. 15-16.)

KILL BILL—VOL. 1
In this Quentin Tarantino fantasy pastiche of samurai and martial-arts films, the trunk of a body, its head lopped off, will spurt blood like a fountain. We know that the non-stop violence is not meant to be real: for starters, the blood looks like cranberry juice. Yet Tarantino is working in a photographic medium, and the real-world associations are not so easy to shrug off. Tarantino's heroine, Uma Thurman, kills another female warrior in front of the woman's little girl, and the child doesn't react. Tarantino wants the shock of a mother killed in front of her daughter without the audience undergoing any discomfort at all. The movie is what's formally known as decadence and commonly known as crap. Saying that it's an homage to long-established genres in Hong Kong doesn't reduce its pop-nihilistic stupidity. Some of the sequences have a scintillating visual flair, but you come out feeling nothing at all. And this is only the first half.—*D.D.* (10/13/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

KING LEAR
Gorgeous, lucid, essential. Working from Boris Pasternak's translation, Grigori Kozintsev put his own political stamp on Shakespeare in this 1971 film. His Lear (Yuri Yarvet) plays foolhardy games with his succession because he has allowed the rhetoric and trappings of power to crowd out his feeling for his family and his state; he dashes from one daughter to another as if on royal safari, with hounds and falcons and a chaotic cadre of knights. Kozintsev employs disintegrating Estonian landscapes and a threnody-like Shostakovich score to evoke medieval balefulness. He also stirs up Christian undercurrents: the audience experiences Lear's fall, his acceptance of his and his people's common lot, and his too-late rapprochement with Cordelia as a religious redemption. In Russian.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Nov. 13-14.)

LOST IN TRANSLATION
Nothing much happens in the new film by the writer-director Sofia Coppola, but she has first-rate abilities as an observer and as a rueful comedian, and much of the movie is sweetly funny and satisfying. In Tokyo, a burned-out American movie

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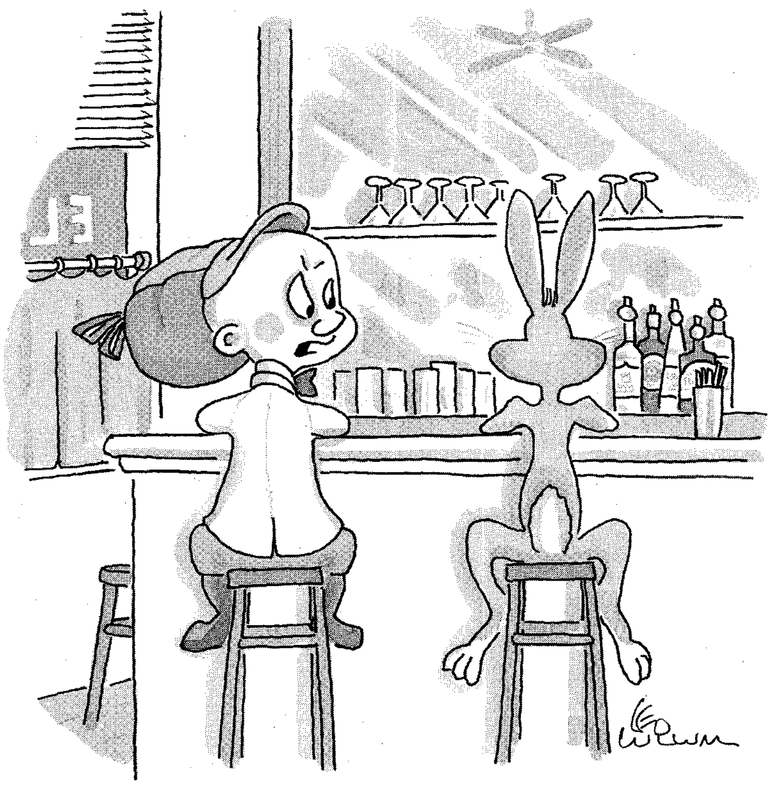
THAT'S NOT QUITE ALL, FOLKS!

Hunting wabbit with classic Warner Bros. cartoons, newly available on DVD.

We should hope that when twentieth-century American civilization is unearthed, future archeologists find, alongside a scrap of a Shaq jersey and a dog-eared copy of "Fear of Flying," some Warner Bros. cartoons. They would shed a good light on us. Compared to Hanna-Barbera or even Disney, Warner cartoons were philosophically sophisticated—Chuck Jones, one of the studio's architects, said that he was interested not in *what* Bugs Bunny was but in *who* he was. They were also more musically rewarding (the composer Carl Stalling found a middle ground between grand opera and the novelty jazz of Raymond Scott) and more aesthetically adventurous (thanks to background painters like Robert Gribbroek and Peter Alvarado, who drew on the landscape of the American Southwest to design the mesas and rock outcroppings that would bedevil Wile E. Coyote for decades). As for theatricality, the voice artist Mel Blanc was the equal of any Shakespearean actor when it came to making magic with a twisted fricative. But the central point is that Warner cartoons were funnier than almost anything else on film. In the hands of directors like Jones, Friz Freleng, and Tex Avery and gag men like Michael Maltese, Bugs was a worthy heir to Groucho Marx, and Daffy Duck was his generation's Jim Carrey, though without the bewildering need to show his soulful side.



"Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, you walk into mine."

The rerelease of classic Warner Bros. shorts has topped the wish lists of film fans since the beginning of the DVD era—yes, even more than the collected slapstick comedies of Sylvester Stallone. And now Warner Bros. has obliged, in a fashion, with the **LOONEY TUNES GOLDEN COLLECTION** (Warner), a four-DVD set with almost seven hours of cartoons and as much supplemental material. The 1975 documentary "The Boys from Termite Terrace" is here, along with commentaries by the animation historians Michael Barrier and Jerry Beck and bright but slight featurettes—Blanc gets less than four minutes, not even as long as a standard short.

Then there are the cartoons. Nearly a thousand Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies shorts were released between the mid-thirties, when the central brain trust was first assembled under the auspices of the animator Leon Schlesinger, and 1963, when Warner Bros., which bought Schlesinger's studio in 1944, shuttered its animation department. This set devotes its first disk to Bugs, splits the second between Daffy and Porky, and gives the balance over to the studio's remaining characters: fifty-six cartoons in all. The anarchic 1953 short "Duck Amuck" is as fine an example of deconstruction as anything in Borges or Barth—Daffy, trying his damnedest to star in a cartoon, is thwarted at every turn by an unseen artist, who redraws scenery, slides a "The End" panel into the frame prematurely, and even erases the increasingly apoplectic duck. In "Rabbit Fire" (1951), in which Bugs, Daffy, and Elmer match wits during hunting season, Blanc does some of his most astounding work, as Daffy imitates Bugs and vice versa. "Rabbit of Seville" (1950) turns opera into surreal vaudeville (Bugs grows flowers on Elmer's bald pate, Bugs and Elmer race each other skyward in their barber's chairs) before ending with nuptials between Bugs and a cross-dressing Elmer.

There's hardly a shortage of classics in the Warner vault, and most of the cartoons here qualify. But there are masterpieces conspicuously missing from this particular collection. Chief among them is "What's Opera, Doc?" from 1957, which brings Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* to the animated world (this time, Bugs wears the dress during the climactic wedding). Warner Bros. cartoons have their casual fans, but mostly they have devotees, and devotees will not be satisfied with a set that omits "What's Opera, Doc?" any more than Dickens fans would accept an omnibus without "A Christmas Carol." And while the Road Runner, Tweety Bird, Foghorn Leghorn, and Yosemite Sam are all accounted for, there seems to be a surplus of charming but inessential stand-alones like "Feed the Kitty." Warner Bros., like any classic Hollywood studio, was at its best when it put a spotlight on its stars.

—*Ben Greenman*

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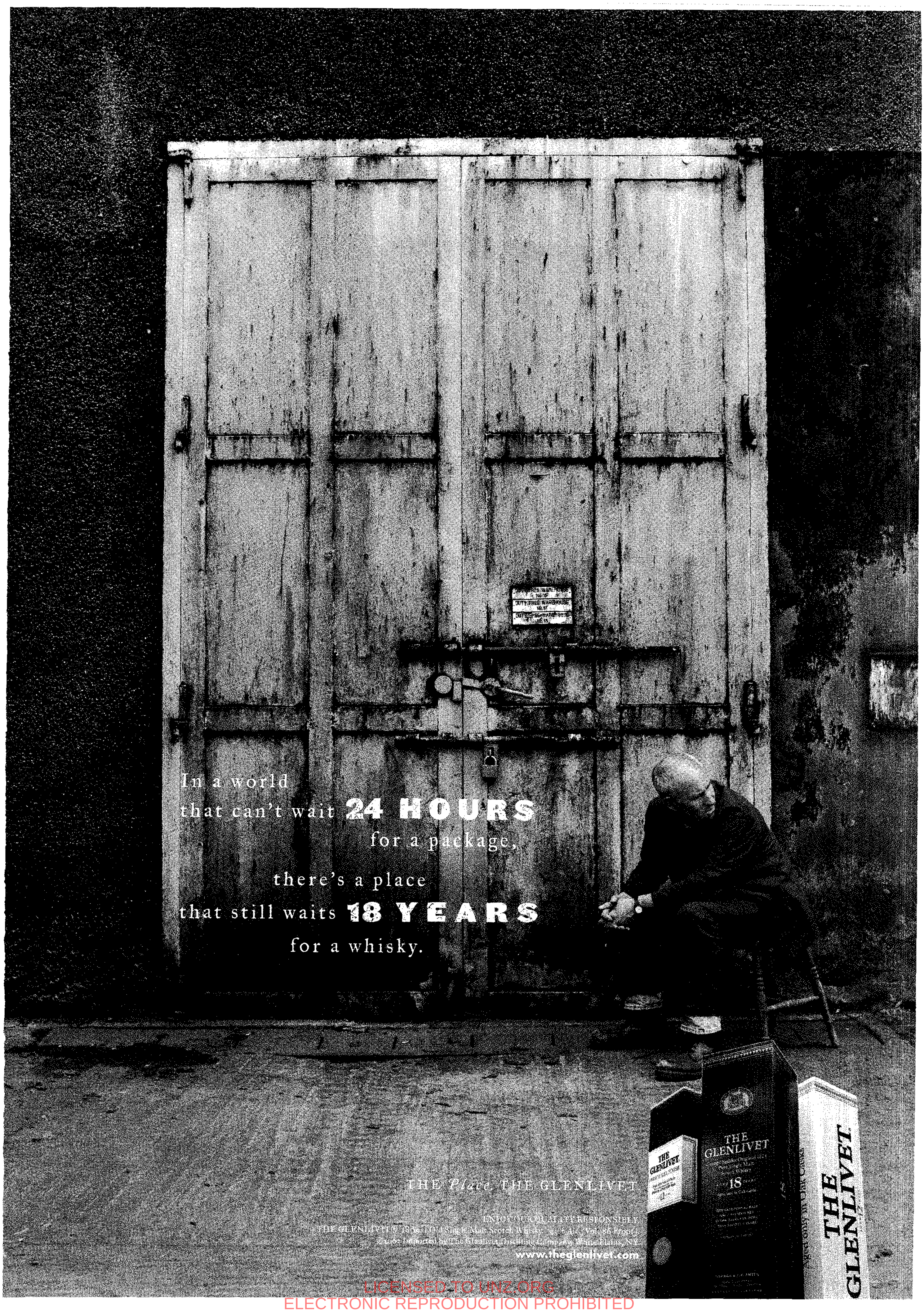
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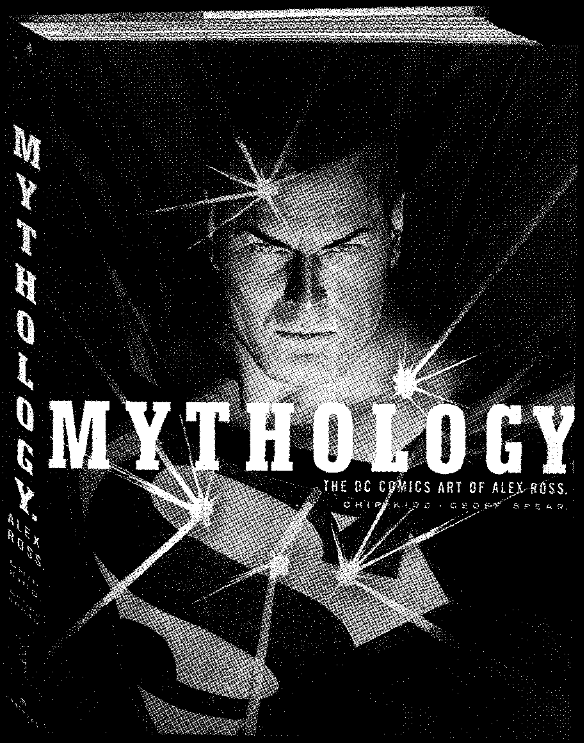
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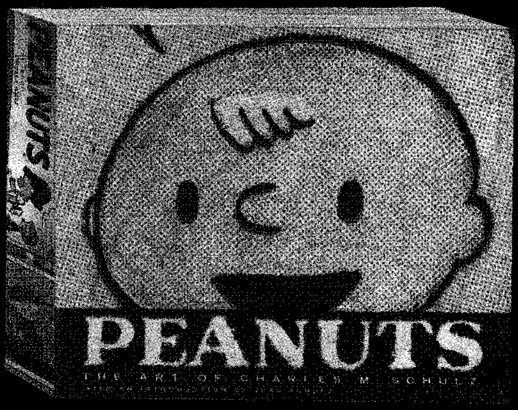
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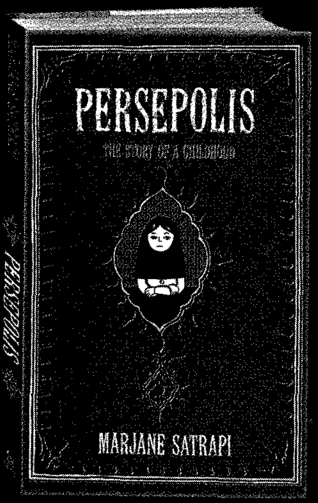
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star named Bob Harris (Bill Murray) shows up to appear in a whiskey ad. Stranded in a sleekly pompous modern hotel, he can't connect with anything or even sleep, but he does hook up (chastely) with a very young woman, Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson), whose fashion-photographer husband (Giovanni Ribisi) is rapidly slipping away from her. Both Bob and Charlotte are in emotional limbo, and they become an odd, inappropriate couple. Murray has never been this quiet, this wary, this subtly acid before—or this warm, either. The drama of the movie, such as it is, lies in seeing just how much he will respond and when.—*D.D.* (9/15/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

MANGO YELLOW

In this rancid slice of lower-depths life in Recife, Brazil, the first-time director Claudio Assis and the remarkable cinematographer Walter Carvalho imbue each packed, color-drenched frame with a dirty vibrancy. The human content, though, is the stuff of art-house exploitation. A mysterious German feeds his jones for shooting corpses with the help of a gay body snatcher. The evangelical wife of a randy butcher turns into Mike Tyson when she confronts her husband's lover (say goodbye to her ear). These and many other flamboyant incidents unfold in settings that range from a homey bar and a picturesque, decrepit hotel to a ghastly slaughterhouse. The penultimate scene—a two-minute montage of everyday city life, including candid group scenes and posed portraits of adults and children, loafers and workers—boasts an eloquence that eclipses everything else in the movie. In Portuguese.—*M.S.* (Gramercy Theatre; Nov. 13-18.)

THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS

In the final installment of the "Matrix" trilogy, the directors Larry and Andy Wachowksi have made the intricacies of the original movie (the play between actual and simulated reality) secondary to the main events of spectacle, fighting, and stunningly wooden dialogue. At its best, the picture is violently exciting; at its worst, banal and monotonous. More than ever, the plot's conventional science-fiction elements (man vs. machine) are in the foreground. The movie may best be described as an enormously sophisticated version of the 1953 George Pal classic, "The War of the Worlds." Serious fans—call them Matricians—will spend hours debating the apocalypse as revealed by the Brothers Wachowski. But if you ignore the wilder speculative meanings inspired by the series, there remains a halfway palpable idea: in a period in which gigantic corporations and entire governments devote themselves to promoting made-up realities, people may genuinely wonder what world they are living in. With Keanu Reeves, Hugo Weaving, Carrie-Anne Moss, Laurence Fishburne, Jada Pinkett Smith, and Cornel West.—*D.D.* (11/10/03) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, Cinema 1, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

MICROCOSMOS

Before "Winged Migration," Jacques Perrin produced this improbably seductive rendering of the secret lives of insects. Perrin and his team plunge us into a mini-wonderland beneath the surface of a French meadow. The intimacy of super-close-up cameras and the complete absence of human perspectives allow viewers to see even the creepiest critters as gorgeous marvels of organic design. Among the stand-out vignettes of this 1996 documentary: the erotic spectacle of full-body snail love, the existential comedy of a dung beetle rolling its prize ball past every obstacle, and the spontaneous mass choreography of a caterpillar conga line. The minimal narration is less important than the inspired orchestration of buzzes and clicks on the soundtrack.—*M.S.* (Sunshine Cinema; Nov. 14-15.)

MYSTIC RIVER

Clint Eastwood's sombre masterpiece, from a novel by Dennis Lehane (Brian Helgeland did the adaptation), is about a working-class Catholic community in Boston held in thrall by an old crime. Back in the seventies, one of three eleven-year-old boys who were close friends was taken away by two men pretending to be cops and sexually assaulted for days before he finally escaped. But it turns out that Dave (Tim Robbins) never escaped at all. Twenty-five years later, he is still shrouded in dreams and terror, and his two friends, Sean (Kevin Bacon), a homicide detective, and Jimmy (Sean Penn), an ex-con who runs a corner grocery, still feel the shame of not helping him. When Jimmy's nineteen-year-old daughter is murdered, the three are uneasily brought back together again. The movie's feeling for the neighborhood milieu is so convincing because there's no distinction between background and foreground—everything we see (faces, living rooms, back yards, weather, battered old cars) is dramatically relevant. Eastwood directs in a gray, end-of-day light and with a minimum of camera rhetoric; he lets the script and the actors do the work. Penn does a few semi-psychotic soliloquies in which he takes off into the stratosphere, joining Marlon Brando as one of the great tragic actors of the screen.—*D.D.* (10/13/03) (Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 19th Street East 6, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

PIECES OF APRIL

Katie Holmes continues to distance herself from her "Dawson's Creek" past, in this sensitive drama written and directed by Peter Hedges. The apple-cheeked actress surrounds her eyes with mascara and slumps her shoulders as April, a rebellious daughter living a shabby-chic life style on the Lower East Side. Her transformation works, for the most part, but the movie's real center of gravity is Patricia Clarkson, as April's mother, suffering from breast cancer. It's a challenging role; Hedges wrote the character as someone who can no longer tolerate sympathy, and Clarkson manages to express vulnerability along with the dry, caustic wit of a woman who has made her reckoning with death. The movie has April reuniting with her mother for Thanksgiving, but it's not a depressing or cheaply sentimental story. With Oliver Platt, Alison Pill, Alice Drummond, and Derek Luke lending fine support as family and boyfriend. Shot on digital video, in a style that is sometimes claustrophobic.—*Michael Agger* (Lincoln Square and Sunshine Cinema.)

RUNAWAY JURY

Though this legal thriller has been billed as Hoffman v. Hackman, the two screen legends have only one scene together, a crisp give-and-take in the men's room. What a letdown—as is the rest of this convoluted adaptation of a John Grisham novel. The courtroom should have been the center of the action. But, while Hoffman is in place as a principled attorney putting the gun companies on trial, Hackman remains off-site as a high-tech jury consultant who watches the proceedings through hidden cameras. It's left to John Cusack and Rachel Weisz, as a mysterious team also bent on manipulating the jury, to confront Hackman. Not exactly a title bout.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 85th Street, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, 62nd & Broadway, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SCARY MOVIE 3

The latest installment in the profitable series of horror-movie spoofs is also the first not written and directed by the fitfully brilliant, if uneven, Wayans brothers. Instead, the movie marks a return to an earlier era of kitchen-sink comedy: the director is David Zucker ("Airplane!," "The Naked Gun"), and Pat Proft, his longtime collaborator, is one of the many writers credited on the project. While the original "Scary Movie" was practically a scene-by-scene lampoon of the already parodic "Scream" franchise, this one, in classic Zucker fashion, is far more scattershot: it mocks the entire oeuvre of M. Night Shyamalan, the death-by-videotape shocker "The Ring" (one of the most inspired sequences is a parody of that film's creepy black-and-white movie-within-a-movie), and even the hip-hop Horatio Alger story "8 Mile," which isn't a horror movie unless you happen to be Eminem's mother. The spirit is willing, but the material is

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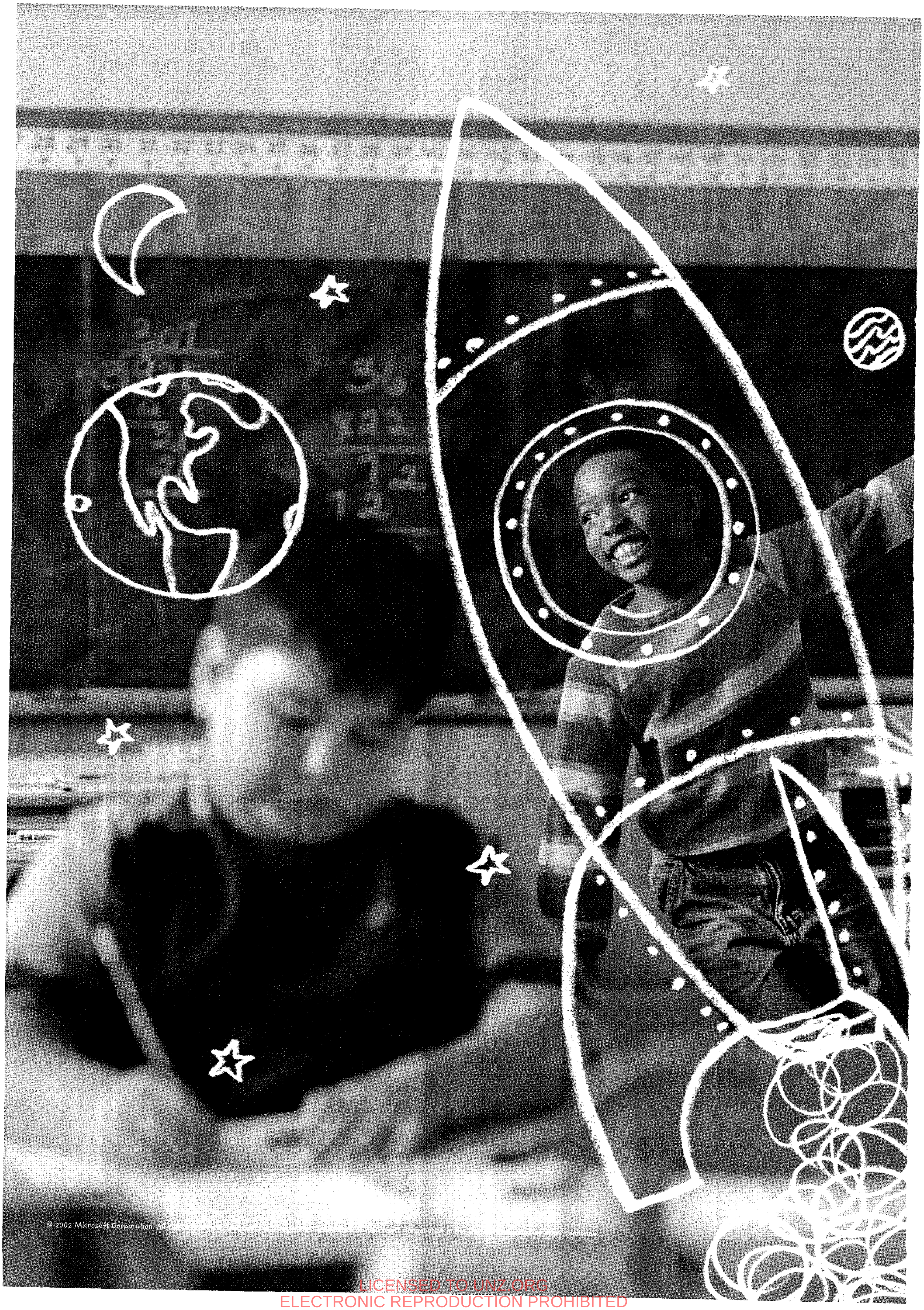

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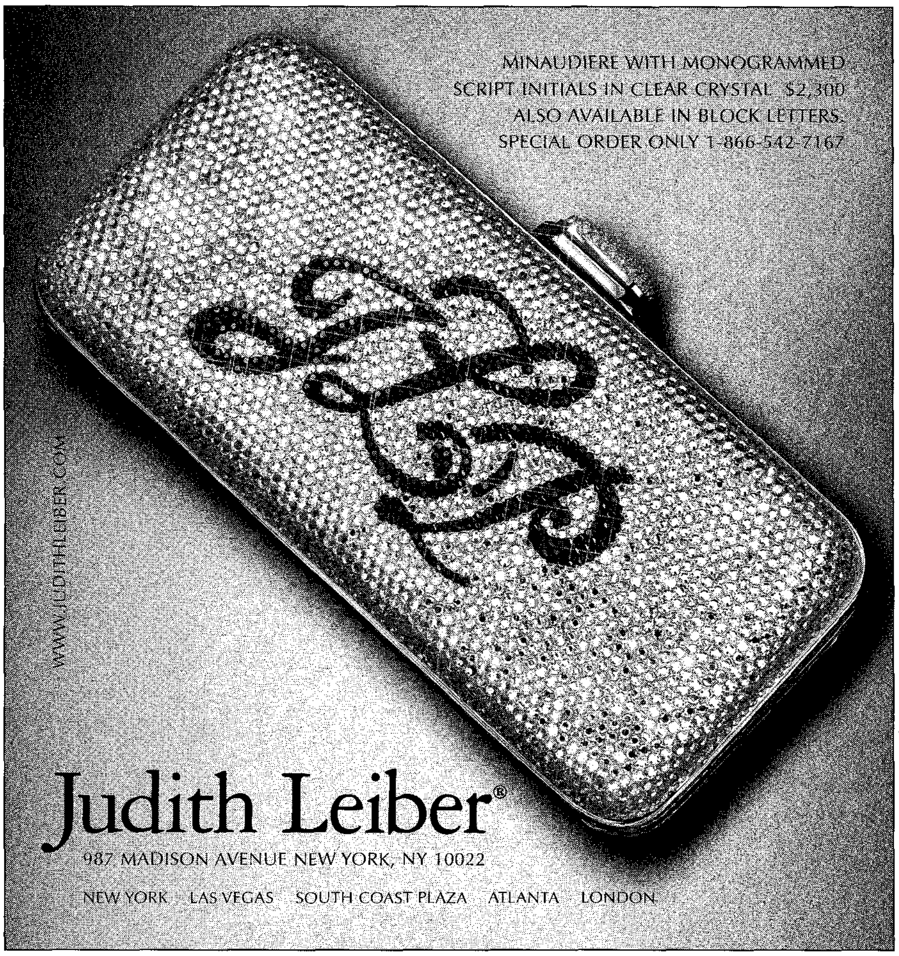
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never quite there, despite game performances from Anna Faris, Charlie Sheen, Queen Latifah, Leslie Nielsen, Jenny McCarthy, Pamela Anderson, George Carlin, and the Michael Jackson impersonator Edward Moss.—*Ben Greenman* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Sutton 1 and 2, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SCHOOL OF ROCK

Fans of Jack Black, your cup runneth over. He plays Dewey Finn, a mediocre but enthusiastic guitarist who bluffs his way into a substitute-teaching position at an exclusive private elementary school. At first, the job is purgatory, but then it's paradise: some of the fifth graders turn out to be skilled classical musicians, and soon Black begins instructing them in the finer points of power chords. The movie nostalgically celebrates the liberating power of classic rock—the way it could impart coolness to all true believers. The kids are cute, and their acting, for better or worse, belongs to the amateurish tradition of "The Bad News Bears." Mike White's somewhat (for him) generic script sets the stage for Black to cut loose. The actor has a knack for moving his body in funny ways, and he sings and prances for the camera in a risky and aerobic performance. Joan Cusack offers fine support as the tightly wound principal. Richard Linklater directed, with his trademark touch of conveying milieu.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SEVEN SAMURAI

Seven hired knights defend a village against forty mounted bandits—their pay a few handfuls of rice. This three-and-a-half-hour epic on violence and action—Akira Kurosawa's masterpiece—has been widely imitated, but no one has come near it. With Toshiro Mifune and Takashi Shimura. Originally released in 1954. In Japanese.—*P.K.* (Thalia Theatre; Nov. 15-16.)

SHATTERED GLASS

If you are searching for the definitive illustration of a tempest in a teacup, look no further. The writer and director Billy Ray has filmed the story of Stephen Glass, the young reporter who forged facts in a string of pieces that he wrote for *The New Republic* in the late nineteen-nineties. Glass is expertly played by Hayden Christensen as a puppyish geek, digging himself into ever deeper holes. Glass's editors at the time were Michael Kelly (Hank Azaria), who was fired in the midst of the Glass farrago, and then Chuck Lane (Peter Sarsgaard), who fired Glass himself. Insiders may lap this stuff up, but visitors from the outside world will wonder what the fuss is about, and the movie is scripted, shot, and scored with such undying solemnity that fits of shameful giggles may be heard in cinemas across the land. With Chloë Sevigny, naturally, as one of Glass's fellow-reporters.—*A.L.* (11/3/03) (Angelika Film Center and Paris.)

THE STATION AGENT

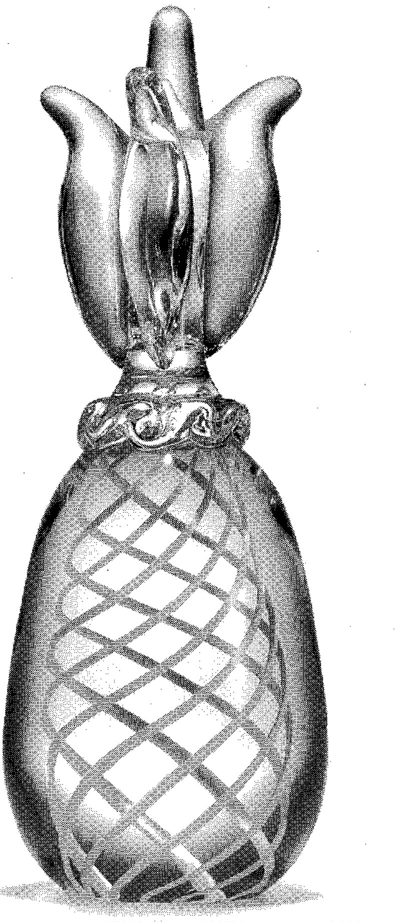
The writer and director Tom McCarthy has turned his attention to a New Jersey backwater and come up with something lyrical, taciturn, and stripped of sentimentality. Peter Dinklage plays Fin, a dwarf who inherits a cabinlike home beside a railroad track in Newfoundland, in Morris County. Fin loves trains and not much else—hardly surprising, given that the world has shown him little more than a laugh and a sneer—and he is none too thrilled when his quiet space is invaded. Over time, though, he warms to the invaders: Joe (Bobby Cannavale), loud and lonely, who sells coffee and hot dogs from a neighboring van, and Olivia (Patricia Clarkson), a painter, still mourning the loss of a young son. The three of them fall in with one another, then fall out, then gradually fall back in; like some of the best short stories, the picture evades grandeur, mature enough to linger on what nearly happens. None of the central performers put a foot wrong, and McCarthy takes care not to insist that small is beautiful; rather, he and Dinklage leave us reflecting that small can be angry, tired, and tough.—*A.L.* (10/6/03) (Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SYLVIA
If Mel Brooks had got his hands on the story of Ted Hughes and Sylvia Plath, we could have been treated to a chorus line of suicidal poets chanting "It's a gas!" As it is, we must make do with this bleak account of intertwining lives. Plath (Gwyneth Paltrow) meets Ted Hughes (Daniel Craig) in 1956 and marries him shortly afterward, to the polite consternation of her mother (Blythe Danner). The action switches from a morose England to a bright and bracing America, then back again; the second half of the picture leads us through the plunging of Plath's moods, the publication of her poems, and her death, in 1963. The screenwriter, John Brownlow, and the director, Christine Jeffs, handle this material with patience and tact, and Paltrow is unafraid to show the sour and simmering side of her heroine. We come away convinced of the poets' shared intensity, and deeply relieved that we are able to observe it from a safe distance.—*A.L.* (10/20/03) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

TO BE AND TO HAVE
Lean, quick, and devastatingly adroit at the age of fifty-five, the teacher Georges Lopez presides over a one-room schoolhouse in this marvellous documentary shot in the Auvergne region of France. Monsieur Lopez divides the children, ages three to eleven, into three groups, and enforces strict discipline. No one could call his methods progressive; no one could call them ineffective, either. Watching the intensity of his work from moment to moment, child by child, reveals a craft exercised on a level at which skill and love have become indistinguishable. The filmmaker Nicolas Philibert brings the same kind of dedication to his own work. The children are great, unwary camera subjects, and Philibert gives us beautifully composed views of them, granting us enough time to observe each child closely, imagine his circumstances, and see what he does or doesn't learn. The documentary is a deeply satisfying aesthetic and pedagogic experience, though Americans may wonder how such terrific children can become such irritating adults. In French.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNDER THE TUSCAN SUN
A soft-core renovation fantasy for educated women. Frances (Diane Lane), a San Francisco writer and teacher dumped by her adulterous husband, goes on a bus tour of Tuscany and falls in love with a crumbling old villa. After many blissfully undramatic episodes—an ancient wall falls down, a toilet mysteriously emits boiling water—the house gets scraped, plastered, painted, and gardened back into shape. It's Frances's life, of course, that really needs work. Luckily, in Rome, she finds Marcello (Raoul Bova)—yard-wide shoulders, blue eyes, all of Italian manhood in a white suit—and drives off with him in his Alfa Romeo convertible. There's a lot more of this sort of harmless, pleasant, inconsequential stuff, with much of it redeemed by the good humor of the writer-director Audrey Wells, who serves up clichés and makes fun of them at the same time. With Sandra Oh as a sharp-tongued Bay Area lesbian friend of Frances's who arrives in Tuscany to have a baby.—*D.D.* (9/29/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village East Cinemas.)

VERONICA GUERIN
This story of the Irish newspaper journalist who exposed the doings of Dublin's drug lords in the nineteen-nineties is worth seeing for Cate Blanchett's smart, tough performance. Her wide cheekbones and elegantly sculpted mouth have made Blanchett a natural for monarchs and goddesses, but as the gleeful and egocentric commoner Guerin, she's more excitingly alive than she's ever been onscreen. She plays the reporter as a maddeningly reckless woman who expects to get away with what she's doing *because* she is a woman. Produced by Jerry Bruckheimer and directed by Joel Schumacher, the movie has been put together with professional skill and bite. Yet, apart from Blanchett, it's not very interesting. It gives the impression that confronting thugs in person is what journalism consists of, and there are so many face-off



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scenes that Guerin eventually comes off as a pest and a monomaniac. The assassination scene delivers not rage or sorrow but something like relief.—*D.D.* (11/10/03) (84th Street Sixplex and Union Square.)

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Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
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Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Cinema Tropical." Nov. 14 at 7:30: "Saturday" (2001, Juan Villegas; in Spanish). ♦ Through Nov. 19: A Tim Burton retrospective. Nov. 15 at 2: "Edward Scissorhands" (1990). ♦ Nov. 15 at 4: "Sleepy Hollow" (1999). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2: "Mars Attacks!" (1996). ♦ Nov. 16 at 4: "Planet of the Apes" (2001). ♦ Repertory nights. Nov. 15-16 at 6:30: "Le Petit Soldat" (1963, Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Nov. 12 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "The Beast" (1975, Walerian Borowczyk; in French). ♦ Recent films from Austria. All films are in German. Nov. 13 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Jesus, You Know" (2003, Ulrich Seidl). ♦ Nov. 14 at 2 and 6:50: "Film Ist. 7-12" (2002, Gustav Deutsch). ♦ Nov. 14 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Step on It" (2002, Sabine Derflinger). ♦ Nov. 15 at 2 and 6:50: "Lovely Rita" (2001, Jessica Hausner). ♦ Nov. 15 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Northern Skirts" (1999, Barbara Albert). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2 and 6:50: "The Inheritors" (1998, Stefan Ruzowitzky). ♦ Nov. 16 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Megacities" (1998, Michael Glawogger). ♦ "History as Nightmare: The 60s." Nov. 17 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Joe" (1970, John Avildsen).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Nov. 12-13 at 1, 2:50, 4:40, 6:30, 8:20, and 10:10: "Eyes Without a Face" (1959, Georges Franju; in French). ♦ Nov. 14-18 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "I Vitelloni" (†).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—Through Dec. 23: "Petits Bijoux," underappreciated French films. Nov. 18 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "De Mayerling à Sarajevo" (1940, Max Ophuls; in French).

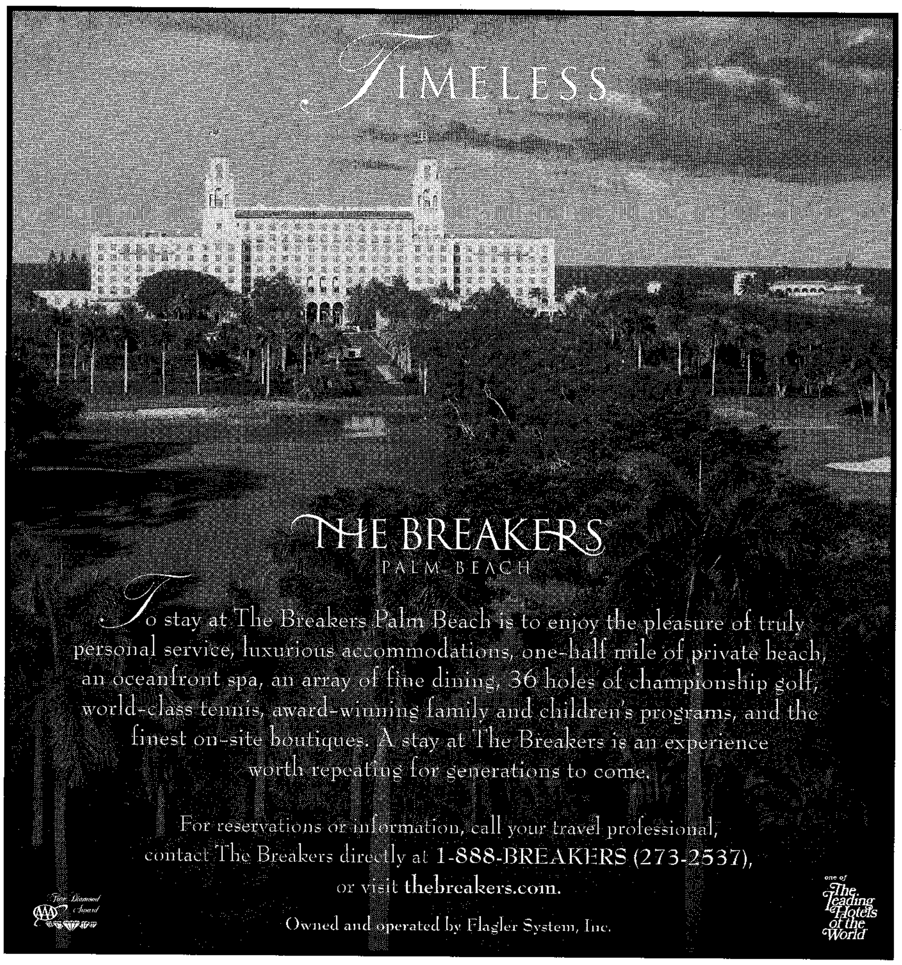
GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Jan. 31: "Kino 2003: New German Films."All films are in German. Nov. 13 at 3:45: "My Last Film" (2002, Oliver Hirschbiegel). ♦ Nov. 13 at 5:30: "Hello Dachau!" (2002, Bernd Fischer). ♦ Nov. 15 at 1: "The Publisher" (2001, Bernd Bohlich). ♦ Nov. 15 at 9: "Angst" (2002, Oskar Roehler). ♦ Nov. 16 at 2: "The Longing" (2002, Iain Dilthey). ♦ Nov. 16 at 8: "Céleste" (1981, Percy Adlon). ♦ "Global Lens: New Cinema from the Developing World." Nov. 13 at 7:30, Nov. 14 at 8, Nov. 15 at 7, Nov. 16 at 4, Nov. 17 at 6, and Nov. 18 at 7: "Mango Yellow" (†). ♦ Nov. 14 at 2: "Shadow Kill" (2002, Adoor Gopalakrishnan; in Malayam). ♦ Nov. 14 at 4: "Angel on the Right" (2002, Djamshed Usmonov; in Tajik). ♦ Nov. 15 at 5: "Khorma" (2002, Jilani Saadi; in Arabic). ♦ Nov. 16 at 6: "Wretched Lives" (2001, Joel Lamangan; in Tagalog).

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—Through Jan. 14: A Federico Fellini retrospective. All films are in Italian. Nov. 12 at 7: "The Swindle" (1955). ♦ Nov. 14 at 7: "Nights of Cabiria" (1957). ♦ Nov. 15 at 3: "La Dolce Vita" (†).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Nov. 14-15: "Microcosmos" (†).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—An Akira Kurosawa retrospective. All films are in Japanese. Nov. 15 at 1:30 and 8:45 and Nov. 16 at 4:45: "Kagemusha" (†). ♦ Nov. 15 at 5 and Nov. 16 at 1 and 8:15: "The Seven Samurai" (†).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Dec. 4: "Another Russia: A Tribute to Lenfilm Studios." Nov. 12 at 1:30 and 6 and Nov. 15 at 3:15: "Masquerade" (1941, Sergei Gerasimov). ♦ Nov. 12 at 3:45 and 8:15: "Deputy for the Baltic Fleet" (1936, Iosef Heifits and Alexander Zarkhi). ♦ Nov. 13 at 1 and 9 and Nov. 14 at 8:15: "King Lear" (†). ♦ Nov. 13 at 3:45, Nov. 15 at 7:15, and Nov. 16 at 8: "The Errors of Youth" (1978, Boris Frumin). ♦ Nov. 14 and Nov. 16 at 1:30: "Peter the Great (Parts One and Two)" (1937-38, Vladimir Petrov). ♦ Nov. 14 at 6:15, Nov. 16 at 6, and Nov. 18 at 4: "A Long Happy Life" (1966, Gennady Shpalikov). ♦ Nov. 15 at 1:30 and 5:30: "Katka's Reinette Apples" (1926, Friedrich Ermler and Edouard Ioganson). ♦ Nov. 15 at 9:30: "Second Circle" (1990, Alexander Sokurov). ♦ Nov. 18 at 2: "The Beginning" (1970, Gleb Panfilov).



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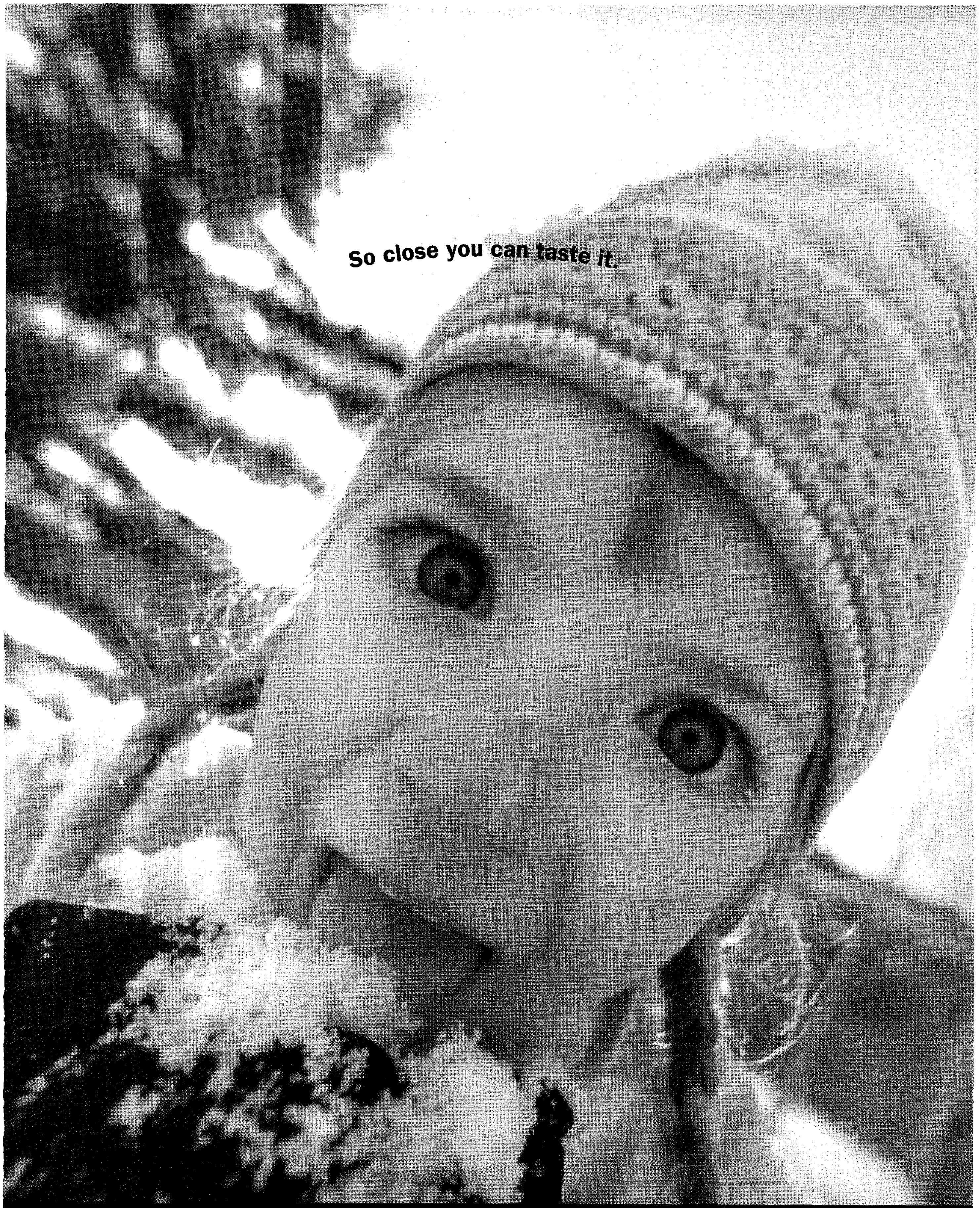
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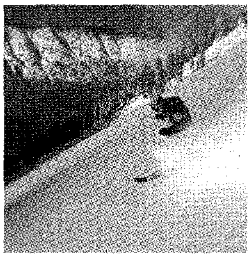

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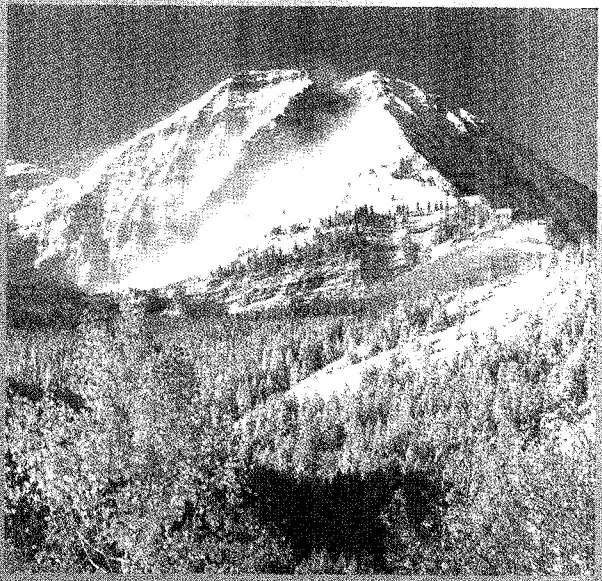

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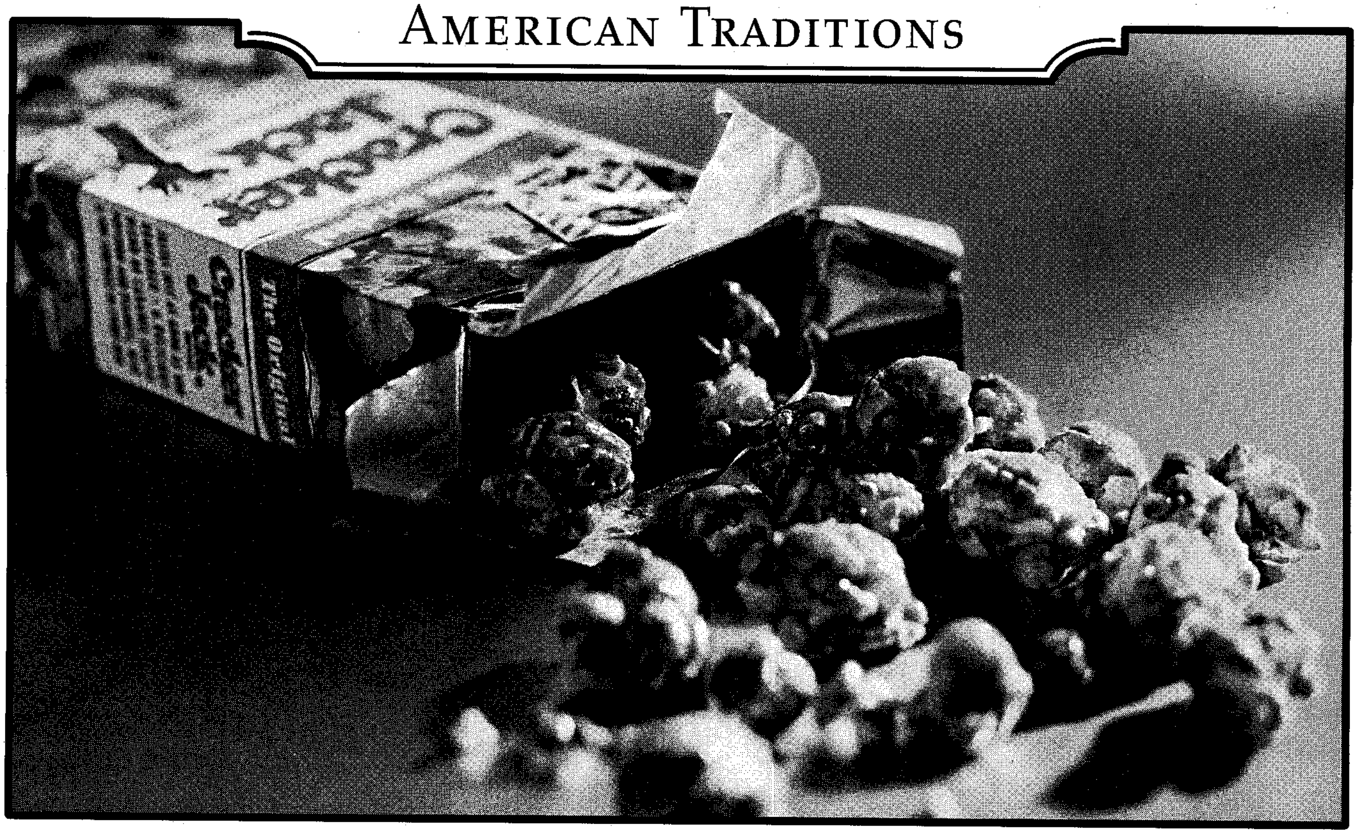

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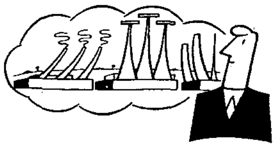
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

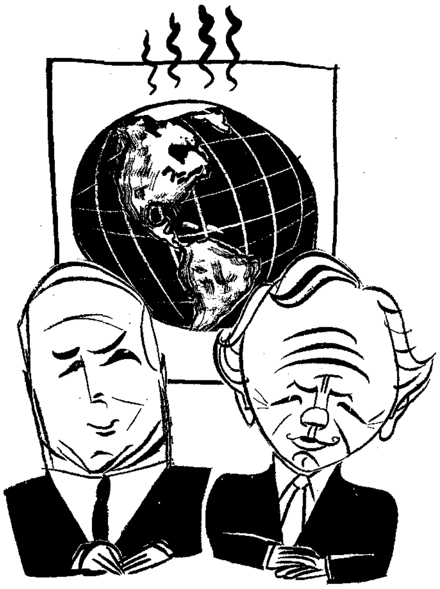
COMMENT
GETTING WARMER



During the debate last month on the Climate Stewardship Act, Senator John McCain, the Arizona Republican, held up a map of the Arctic ice cap. The map, based on a series of NASA satellite photographs, showed the extent of year-round sea ice over the Arctic twenty-four years ago and the extent of that sea ice today. In 1979, the ice began halfway down the east coast of Greenland, extended over the North Pole, and stretched, uninterrupted, to Siberia. Now it begins above Greenland, and an expanse of open water extends north from Siberia for hundreds of miles. Altogether, the ice cap has shrunk by two hundred and fifty million acres, an area the size of California and Texas combined. According to NASA's latest calculations, it is continuing to retreat at a rate of nine per cent per decade and could well disappear by the end of this century.

As McCain pointed out, the Climate Stewardship Act, which he co-sponsored with Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Connecticut Democrat, is, on the scale of global catastrophe, "a very minimal proposal." The bill would cap emissions of six greenhouse gases—most significantly, carbon dioxide—at 2000 levels and establish a trading system under which corporations that came in under their caps would receive credits, which they could sell to others. A study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology estimated that the bill would cost the average household less than twenty dollars a year. (A similar cap-and-trade system, put in place in 1995 to combat acid rain, has helped to reduce sulfur-dioxide emissions in the United States by more than thirty per cent.) Minimal though it was, the McCain-Lieberman bill was nonetheless rejected in the Senate by a vote of fifty-five to forty-three, with ten Democrats crossing party lines to oppose it. It is a measure of how demoralized environmentalists are these days that many of them treated this solid defeat as a victory.

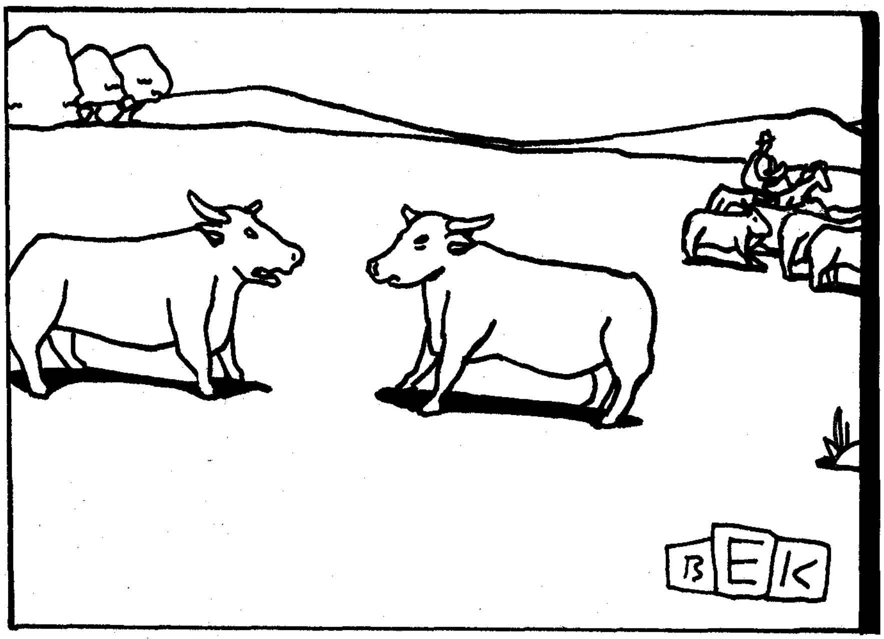
ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL



Senators McCain and Lieberman

The Climate Stewardship Act was the first bill of its kind to reach the Senate floor since 1997, when the body effectively sank the Kyoto Protocol by a vote of ninety-five to zero. In the intervening years, the evidence that human activity is changing the planet's climate has continued to mount, as has evidence of the consequences. Roads in Alaska are buckling because of liquefying permafrost, islands are disappearing as a result of higher sea levels, and the glaciers of Glacier National Park are retreating so quickly that some have suggested, only half in jest, that the park will soon have to be renamed. Among the many unfortunate aspects of this vast melt-off is that, because bare ground and seawater absorb sunlight more efficiently than ice does, the warming process tends to be self-reinforcing. As NASA dryly put it in the press release accompanying its latest study of the shrinking ice cap, "The rate of decline is expected to accelerate due to positive feedback systems between the ice, oceans, and atmosphere." In another NASA report, released last month, researchers found that between 1995 and 2000 the melting rate of the Patagonian ice fields, in Chile and Argentina, had more than doubled.

The United States funds much of the world's best research on climate change, yet no other developed nation takes the results less seriously. James Inhofe, an Oklahoma Republican, chairs the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee, which oversees legislation concerning carbon-dioxide emissions. In



"I disagree with a lot of the way he herds."

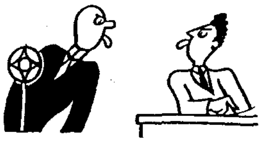
• •

a two-hour speech on the subject a few months ago, Inhofe made a hash of several decades' worth of climate studies, and concluded, "With all of the hysteria, all of the fear, all of the phony science, could it be that man-made global warming is the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people? It sure sounds like it." Though it's impossible to determine exactly how much of the current warming trend is the result of atmospheric changes wrought by man and how much is caused by natural climate variation, the vast majority of credible studies in fact point to the former as the more significant factor. President Bush, defending his opposition to all forms of carbon regulation, claims that he is waiting for a scientific consensus to emerge—even as his Administration has been working hard to suppress the inconvenient fact that such a consensus already exists. This past spring, for example, when the Environmental Protection Agency was drafting a report on the general state of the environment, the White House edited—one might as well say censored—the section on climate, deleting references to a 1999 study that showed anomalously steep increases in global temperatures during the previous decade. These references were replaced by references to a rival report, financed in part by the American Petroleum Institute. (Just last week, in another gift to the energy industry, the Administration announced that it was dropping more than fifty investigations into violations of the Clean Air Act by power-plant operators.)

In this context, the fact that the McCain-Lieberman bill was given a chance to fail actually does represent progress. Not that long ago, McCain, too, took the position that not enough was known about the climate to merit action; he became convinced of the urgency of the problem, he has said, after holding a set of hearings and listening to the evidence. McCain succeeded in getting the Climate Stewardship Act onto the floor by employing some of the same tactics he used to get his campaign-finance bill approved—in order to move the act out of Inhofe's committee, he reportedly threatened to hold up the dreadful energy bill that is now making its way out of conference—and no one who watched him during the campaign-finance battle can doubt his tenacity. Moreover, as McCain suggested during last month's debate, time is, in a grim sort of way, on his side. "We will be back," he said after holding up his map of the ice cap. "Because these pictures will continue to get worse, and won't improve until we begin to address this issue."

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*

STICKS AND STONES
BLALKING



In San Diego last month, the *Times* columnist Paul Krugman dropped by the Revelle Forum lecture series and was greeted with rapturous applause. He delivered a half-hour speech, which amounted to an indictment of the entire economic strategy of the Bush Administration, and afterward stuck around to sign copies of his new book, "The Great Unraveling: Losing Our Way in the New Century." The line inched forward, and, after a time, a member of the audience, carrying a camcorder to record the event for posterity, stepped up and asked Krugman to personalize his inscription.

"All right," Krugman said. "What's your name?"

"Don Luskin," the man replied. Krugman hesitated for a moment, then signed. "Now, you keep up the good work, Paul," Luskin said, grinning.

That night, Luskin returned to his hotel room (he'd flown down from Silicon Valley) and wrote a long entry on his blog, Poorandstupid.com. "I have looked evil in the face," he said. "I've been in the same room with it. I don't know how else to describe my feelings now except to say that I feel unclean, and I'm having to fight being afraid."

Luskin wasn't the only person to be unsettled by the encounter. Back in May, Krugman, who likes to refer to his most persistent Internet critics as stalkers, had identified Luskin, in a Web posting, as his "stalker-in-chief." (In addition to Poorandstupid.com, which features a caricature of Krugman's head superimposed on the Ghostbusters logo, Luskin writes the "Krugman Truth Squad" column for *National Review Online.*) Now, having been surprised in real time by his virtual nemesis, Krugman had to wonder, if only for a second, whether the phrase was more accurate than he imagined. Krugman occasionally receives death threats, and in the past month he has started turning ominous e-mails over to the F.B.I. On the Fox News show "Hannity & Colmes," a week or so after the lecture, Krugman responded to an accu-

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sation—the source of it was Poorandstupid.com—by saying, "That's a guy who actually stalks me on the Web, and once stalked me personally."

So began Stalkergate, a journalistic mud-wrestling match featuring allegations of dishonesty, libel, and all-around creepy conduct. Luskin counterattacked with a new "Truth Squad" installment, citing Krugman's "ultra-leftist conspiracy fantasies," demanding a retraction and an apology, and requesting an opportunity to set the record straight on "Hannity & Colmes." That opportunity was quickly granted. On the air, Sean Hannity asked Luskin, "Don, you gonna sue him?," to which Luskin responded, "Well, you know, my counsel told me to respond to a question like that by saying that I can't respond to a question like that."

Luskin's Krugman-baiting—though more or less a hobby, while he works as an investment consultant—is the latest incarnation of an old tradition, dating back to the days of that great Colonial pundit Thomas Paine, who was hounded relentlessly by William Cobbett, a.k.a. Peter Porcupine, in the *Porcupine's Gazette*. The bird-dogging game abated over time, but it has been revived in the Internet era, with the proliferation of nitpicking bloggers, or what you might call "blalkers."

In the past few weeks, debates have been raging in blogland about the various definitions of "stalking." (O.E.D. vs. California penal: "pursuit of game by the method of stealthy approach"; or "a knowing and willful course of conduct directed at a specific person that seriously alarms, annoys, torments, or terrorizes.") An anonymous blogger known as Atrios, who had linked to a Luskin column with the phrase "Diary of a Stalker," received a cease-and-desist letter from Luskin's attorney. Atrios in turn posted the letter, and soon Luskin and his lawyer were receiving stalkerlike e-mails and phone calls of their own.

By the middle of last week, Luskin and Atrios had settled their differences, but the Krugman camp wasn't negotiating. In separate phone calls, the two combatants elaborated on their positions. (Krugman and Luskin, fierce and sarcastic at the keyboard, are both soft-spoken and unassuming in conversation.)

Luskin: "Krugman going on 'Hannity & Colmes' is the one critical moment. That phrase 'stalked me personally' is a very important turning point, where he changes the term from metaphor to a specific accusation of illegal activity."

Krugman: "I mean, yes, he's not a literal stalker, in the sense that he's going to stick a knife in my back or anything. But certainly there's something wrong there, and this is not just solipsism—there's some kind of personal obsession going on."

Luskin: "I've been writing a book. It's not *about* Krugman, but he in a single symbol brilliantly exemplifies the conspiracy to keep you poor and stupid, which is the name of my book."

Krugman: "It's amazing—after Luskin wages a non-stop war against me, I use an unflattering term to describe him and he wants to sue?"

Krugman did plead guilty to one of Luskin's charges—partisanship. "I think it's pretty clear that I'm not going to be voting Republican in 2004, and it's pretty clear that Bill Safire isn't going to be voting Democratic," he said. (Luskin, a registered Libertarian, won't be voting either party.)

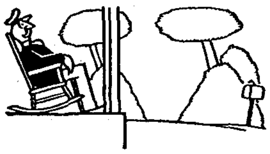
Krugman reaches more than a million *Times* readers, and Luskin's views are available, at least, to millions more, but both men can become surprisingly prickly when confronted by their audiences. Luskin was particularly bothered by some of the personal attacks that have been prompted by the dispute. "You should ask yourself how you would feel if people were saying these things about you and your family," he said.

"I find it a little bit creepy to be spotted even by people who support me," Krugman said. "The other day, somebody saw me and raised his fist, and said, 'Keep kicking ass, dude!' Which was in a way kind of nice, but also kind of—'Oh, my God, are there people who actually recognize me on the street?' "

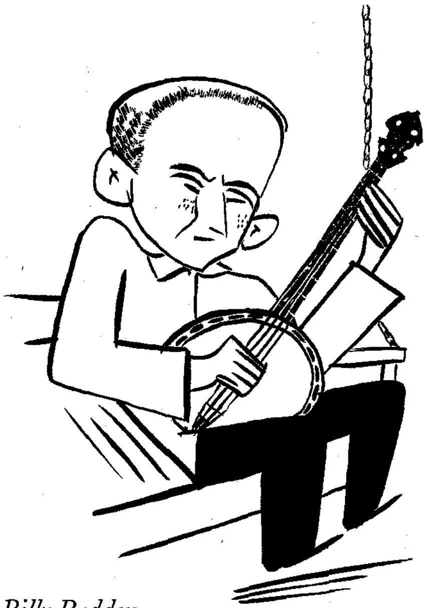
—*Ben McGrath*

THE PICTURES

THE RETURN OF BANJO BOY



Billy Redden is synonymous with a singular type of movie role: the banjo boy. He got his start in the 1972 film "Deliverance," which followed four urbanites on a canoe trip through rural Georgia. After a bit of exposition, the film really begins at a backwoods gas station, where Redden, as Lonny, sits with a banjo on a porch swing, arrestingly still, his pale, flat eyes and stony face those of a fledgling buzzard. (On a casting call at the local Clayton Elementary School, the filmmakers had chosen Redden for his insular look.) Ned Beatty's character, Bobby, glances at Lonny and murmurs, "Talk about genetic deficiencies—isn't that pitiful?" But when Drew, played by Ronny Cox, strums a chord on his guitar, Lonny answers it, and soon the two are locked in a gleeful call-and-response, the bluegrass hit "Dueling Banjos." "Goddamn, you play a mean banjo!" Drew shouts, going to shake Lonny's hand—whereupon the boy turns away. Redden's scene-stealing inscrutability foreshadows the events to come, including Drew's death and, notoriously, Bobby's being forced to squeal like a pig.



Billy Redden

As it turned out, though, there wasn't much demand in Hollywood for banjo boys. Several months ago, when the director Tim Burton was on location in Montgomery, Alabama, shooting "Big Fish," he kept asking where the boy from "Deliverance" was now, because he had a banjo-picking role in mind for him. No one knew. "The state film commissioners down there tried to placate me, or laugh it off," Burton says. "But I was serious; the banjo boy was such an iconic figure to me. Whatever that visceral thing is in film, when you can't explain why a scene grabs you—well, that scene

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had it." Eventually, two "Big Fish" crew members drove through northeast Georgia one Sunday, asking, "Anyone know where the banjo boy lives?"

They finally found him in Dillard. Redden, who is now forty-seven, works ten-hour days as a cook and dishwasher at the nearby Cookie Jar Café, and he was hesitant at first about taking time off to appear in another film. For one thing, he had always regretted being the poster boy for "Deliverance" 's Gothic view of rural America. For another, he hadn't enjoyed working with the film's star, Burt Reynolds. "Burt didn't want to say nothing to nobody," Redden says now. "He wasn't polite. And he made us look real bad—he said on television that all people in Rabun County do is watch cars go by and spit."

What's more, Redden's relationship to banjos remained complicated. For starters, he didn't know how to play. John Boorman, the director of "Deliverance," had presented him with the instrument he used in the scene, declaring, "You pick a mean banjo!" Redden had always treasured the remark, particularly because—after he proved unable to convincingly fake the left-hand fretwork—Boorman had had to deploy another boy to hide behind the swing and slip his hand through Redden's sleeve to finger the changes. But Redden's mother, a custodial worker, had promptly sold the banjo. "I told her, 'I'm not mad,' " Redden says. "My daddy had died when I was a baby, and she needed the money so bad for bills. It did mean something to me, though, that banjo."

The envoys from "Big Fish" convinced Redden that their film—a picaresque fable about a travelling salesman—would be respectful of him and of small-town life. Redden was to be a part of the folksy welcoming committee in the Utopian town of Spectre, where the sun always shines. The sun never shone this spring in Montgomery, however, and Redden sat around the set for weeks awaiting his opportunity. When the sky finally cleared, Tim Burton says, "I didn't give Billy any direction: I told him to be who he was—sweet and a little eerie, maybe—which he was doing all the time anyway. If you're watching the film and you don't recognize the solitary, enigmatic figure on the porch, that's fine. But if you do—well, it just makes me so happy to see him, and I think other people will feel the same way."

In the finished film, which comes out next month, Redden is onscreen for only a few seconds. We hear a hint of "Dueling Banjos," and he is smiling, or almost smiling, and seems to be making amends for the moment, long ago now, when his character spurned an emissary from the larger world.

"Tim Burton said, 'Just sit there and hold that banjo, that's it,' " Redden says. "He was a real nice guy, a lot nicer than Burt Reynolds."

—*Tad Friend*

DEPT. OF SANITATION
WHOOSH

The Avac is New York's only pneumatic garbage-collection system. Designed in the late nineteen-sixties to service Roosevelt Island's housing developments, the system runs under all the island's high-rises. When people throw their garbage down the trash chutes, it piles up for several hours, until a trapdoor opens, sucking the waste into a big underground pipe. Then a complex system of air valves propels the garbage through the pipe at speeds of up to sixty miles per hour. When the trash resurfaces at the Avac center, a squat building at the northern tip of the island, it is dumped into two silo-shaped cyclones, where it is spun like cotton candy and then whooshed down chutes into huge containers.

Ron Marli is one of the people who control the Avac's suction valves; on a normal day, he "pulls" between five and seven tons of garbage. Last year, though, construction began on two thousand new housing units on the southern end of Roosevelt Island, and now the whole Avac system has to be expanded. This is not a simple undertaking: the machine is Swedish, and it is maintained by a Swedish company called Envac, which has been called "the world's largest pneumatic garbage systems maintenance company." The nearest Envac repairman, Frederik Olsson, is stationed in Toronto.

Olsson has been spending a lot of time on Roosevelt Island lately, hanging around the Avac center while the expansion is in progress. "It is a strange way to visit America, but oh, well," he said the other day, when he dropped by the center with Soren Hallberg, an Envac technician from Stockholm. As they lounged with Ron Marli in the Avac center office, the building rumbled with the vaguely digestive thrum of after-lunch waste moving through the pipes.

According to Marli, a small man with a gravelly voice and a pale-yellow beard, the system was conceived at the time when the island, which had been the site of an insane asylum, was being rebuilt as an experiment in social housing. "The idea was no trucks," he said. "No garbage on the streets." In 1975, Roosevelt Island received the second pneumatic garbage system in the nation. "The other one is in Disney World," Marli said. "And, if I ever lose my job here, I'll go to that one."

Olsson, a tall blond man in work boots and loose overalls, coughed politely. "Magic Kingdom can be problematic," he said. "I visit it often. It usually breaks because so many sticky things run through it. This one usually breaks down because New Yorkers throw too many big things away."

"The machine doesn't break down that much," Marli said. "But, you know, you get a rainy weekend and people clean out their closets. They throw away the weirdest stuff. Stereos, old computers, steel pipes." The unwieldy objects sometimes clog the works. One time, a piece of rebar backed up the machine for several hours. Another time, it was a skillet. Envac workers have also recovered geometry textbooks, tape players, window frames, lumber, and old clothes. On a third-floor window ledge, there is an array of houseplants in industrial buckets, rescued from the trash.

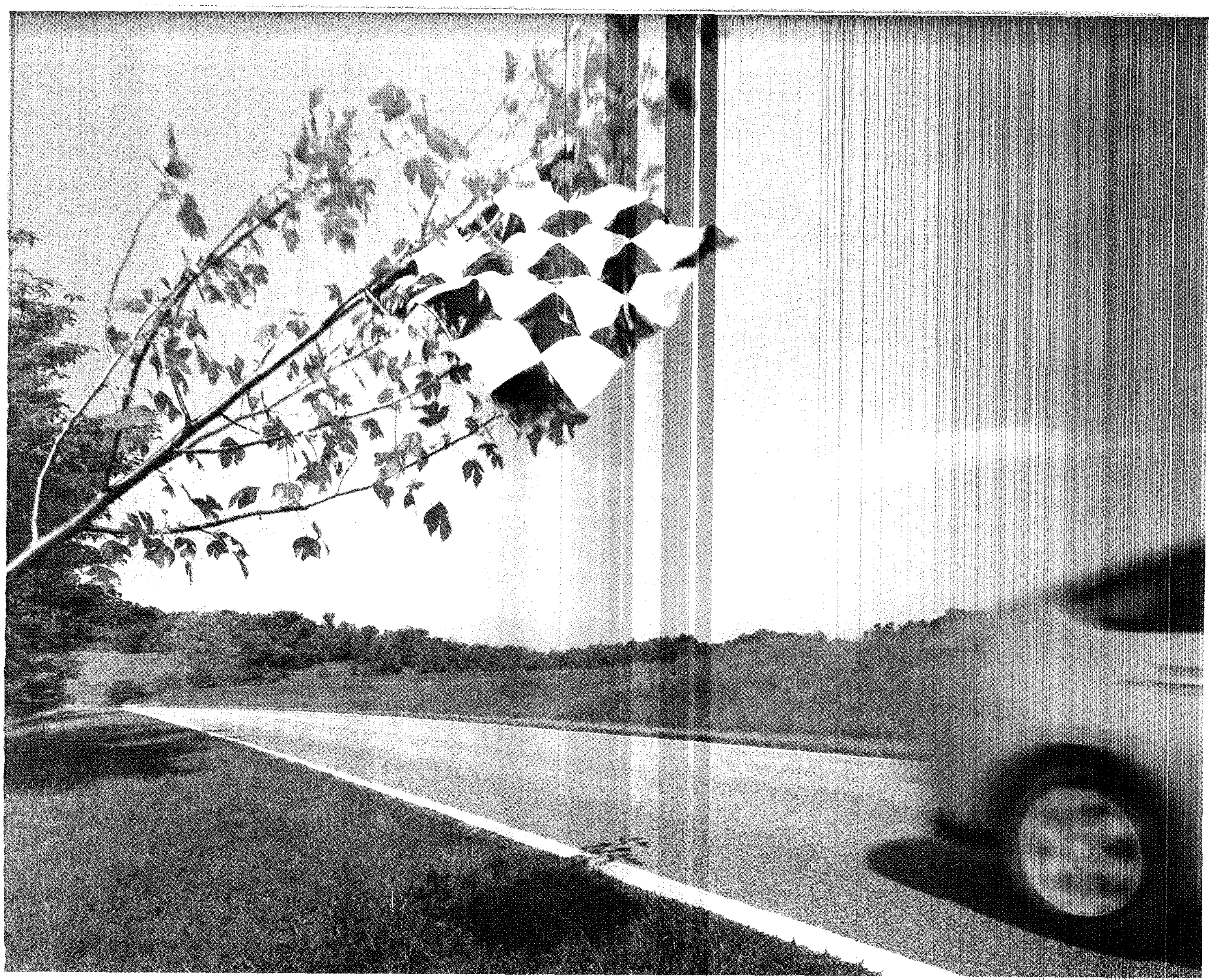
"Swedes do make less garbage, I think," Olsson said. "But the real problem is that Americans tend to run their machines too fast. They just dispose of anything and then, *poof*, want it sucked away. It really adds to the wear and tear on their system."

Hallberg leaned forward. "They have whole towns in Sweden where the system runs wholly automatic," he said.

"Perhaps you could use an Avac under Manhattan," Olsson suggested. "Then you would get the trash bags off the streets. You could run it under the subway."

"Yeah, but God knows what would show up in it then," Marli said.

—*Tess Taylor*



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THE FINANCIAL PAGE

HONG KONG HOOEY

In the nineteen-eighties, as the United States struggled with high unemployment, vanishing factory jobs, and soaring trade deficits, American politicians found their culprit: Japan. Japanese exports were turning America into a land of burger flippers and hair stylists. "We've been running up the white flag, when we should be running up the American flag," Walter Mondale said in 1982. "What do we want our kids to do? Sweep up around Japanese computers?"

Twenty years later, the United States is once more facing high unemployment, vanishing factory jobs, and soaring trade deficits, and American politicians are glaring east again. This time, though, the villain is China. In the past few months, Bush Administration officials have blasted China for its "unfair" trade practices, with Commerce Secretary Donald L. Evans warning Beijing, "Time is running out." Republican Senator Jim Bunning, of Kentucky, said, "The Chinese are cheating," and suggested that the appropriate remedy was a "high inside fastball." (Bunning used to pitch in the major leagues.) Democratic Presidential candidate Dick Gephardt said that trade with China is "a race to the bottom." And a motley crew of congressmen, including liberal Democrats and Southern conservatives, have proposed a bill to slap high-priced tariffs on Chinese goods. "This country can't be a patsy to a foreign competitor," Senator Jeff Sessions, of Alabama, said.

The inspiration for this bout of Sinophobia is our gigantic trade deficit. Last year, America bought about a hundred billion dollars more in goods from China than it sold to China; in the past five years, imports have doubled. China has accelerated this trend by holding down the value of its currency, the yuan. (An undervalued yuan makes Chinese goods cheaper, and American goods more expensive, than they otherwise would be, which, in turn, makes the trade deficit bigger.) Meanwhile, nearly three million American factory jobs have been lost since 2000. The diagnosis seems simple enough, and so does the solution: Get China to stop playing currency games, shrink the trade deficit, and bring back the jobs.

Here's the catch: Chinese companies aren't responsible for American unemployment. By and large, they're making things that Americans don't make anymore—shoes, cheap clothes, consumer electronics. As a recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland puts it, "The sort of jobs that would move to China left the U.S. a long time ago." The real losers are workers in Malaysia, Mexico, and Thailand, who used to make the DVD players and boxer shorts that China now churns out by the million. So, while it's true that China's currency is undervalued, a rise in the yuan wouldn't jump-start manufacturing here. Americans like TVs and T-shirts, so we're going to keep buying them from whoever makes them. And we buy a lot from everyone. This year, eighty per cent of the growth in U.S. imports has come from the rest of the world. Our deficit with the European Union is nearly as big as our deficit with China—perhaps we should buzz Italy with a high inside fastball, too.

Why do the politicians have it in for China? Are they stumping for votes in Ciudad Juárez and Kuala Lumpur? In part, it's that they still have Japan on the brain; Japanese competition may have helped rejuvenate the American economy, but the pain it inflicted on American companies and American workers was real. Entire industries disappeared, and hundreds of thousands of jobs were lost for good. (In the past twenty-five years, General Motors has eliminated more than three hundred thousand jobs.)

Yellow Peril rhetoric aside, China today is not, in any sense, like Japan two decades ago. Japan was competing in businesses that were at the heart of the American economy. What's more, the Chinese are not hostile to imports. Listening to the Bush Administration, you'd think the Chinese had sealed their borders. In fact, with only a few exceptions China is remarkably open to trade and investment: it now attracts more foreign direct investment than any other country in the world. American exports to China have quadrupled since 1990. China's imports relative to its gross domestic product are twice those of the U.S., which hardly suggests sinister mercantilist trade policy.

But never let the facts get in the way of good politics. The dearth of new jobs here stems from a peculiar combination of slow demand and booming productivity, which doesn't make for much of a scapegoat—"war on caution" doesn't really sing. But China, the billion-headed behemoth? That works. China-bashing allows the Bush Administration to pretend that it's doing something real for the economy. It allows members of Congress from textile-producing states—textiles being one of the few industries that Chinese competition has directly affected—to mollify their constituents. And it allows Democrats to pander to organized labor.

Unfortunately, it could also hurt the biggest constituency of all: American consumers. They reap tremendous benefits from trade with China, chief among them low prices. Cumulatively, those benefits are worth billions, but for each individual consumer they are barely perceptible. Compare this with a factory's shutting down, when the costs to each worker are glaring and high. This is the free-trade paradox: the harm to a few often trumps the good of the rest. Really, the campaign against China amounts to a crusade to get Americans to pay more for cameras and underwear. You'd think "Higher prices for everyone!" wouldn't play at the polls. But when you're giving those foreigners a little chin music the crowd goes wild.

—James Surowiecki

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN

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THE POLITICAL SCENE

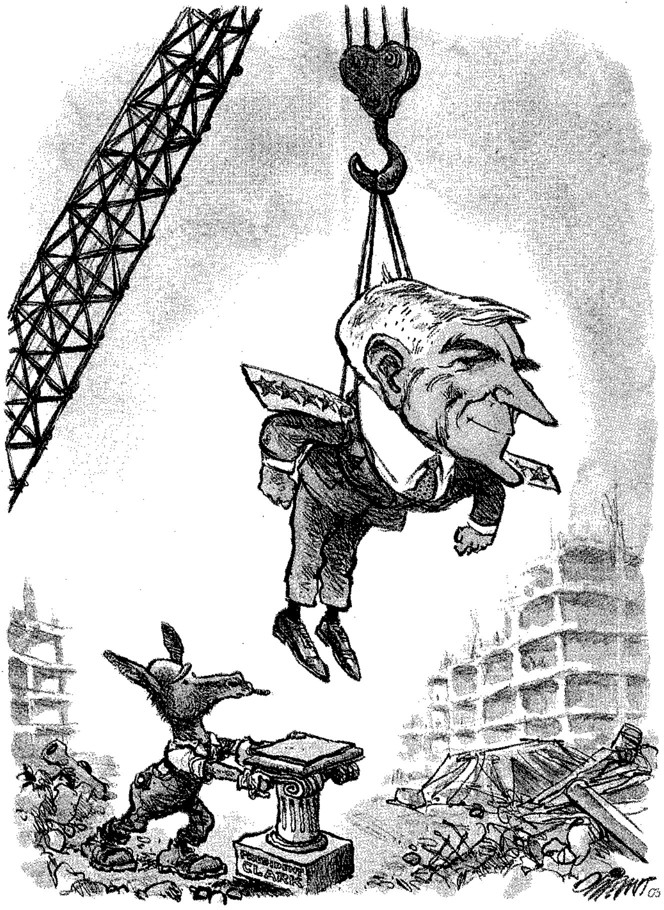
GENERAL CLARK'S BATTLES

The candidate's celebrated—and controversial—military career.

BY PETER J. BOYER

The first important decision of retired Army General Wesley Clark's new political career was the long deferral of its launch. As Clark lodged safely in the rear echelon, the other Democratic Presidential aspirants spent most of the year hustling money at fund-raisers, finessing the Iraq question, and trying to befriend every citizen of Iowa and New Hampshire. By September, a bleak common wisdom had taken hold among Democratic Party pros: the established candidates were struggling, and an outsider, Howard Dean, seemed destined to win the nomination but would be a weak opponent for George W. Bush.

By mid-September, many Democrats were eager to be convinced that Wesley Clark was what Bill Clinton had reportedly declared him to be—the only Democrat besides Hillary Clinton who qualified as a true political "star." He was the anointed choice of many in the Clinton wing of the Party, the stop-Dean candidate charged with keeping Democrats tethered to the center. When Clark finally announced his candidacy, in Little Rock on September 17th, he was surrounded by old Clinton hands and the national press; a loudspeaker played the theme music from the movie "The Natural."



In the Army, the antipathy toward Clark was real and pervasive.

PAT OLIPHANT

It quickly became apparent, however, that Clark, in terms of his oratorical prowess or personal magnetism, was not a natural at all. He required heavy handling on the campaign trail, where, as a political novice, he was prone to gaffes, such as his opening-week assertion that he "probably" would have voted for the congressional resolution authorizing the war in Iraq. One of his press representatives described the misstep as "devastating, a huge mistake"; the mood among Democratic activists is unambiguously antiwar, and Clark's subsequent attempts to amend his position have made him seem confused on the subject. (He eventually declared that he didn't know the full content of the resolution.)

Still, Clark ascended immediately to the top in national polls, and he remains in the upper tier of candidates. On a late-night flight from Iowa City to Little Rock shortly after his announcement, I asked him how he explained his appeal. "Democrats are desperate for someone who's got a coherent message and the courage to deliver it," he said. "It just seems to me that much of the Democratic dialogue, preëlection, in recent years has been stressed in terms of policies. It's 'He believes in universal health care.' Or 'He believes in something else.' Or it's been expressed in terms of labelling. Like 'He's a moderate,' 'He's a liberal.' I think that my candidacy is not as easily tagged."

Clark seemed to recognize that the central message of his candidacy is Wesley Clark, and the uniform he wore for thirty-four years as an officer in the United States Army. For many Democrats today, the uniform is a kind of talisman, a tool for neutralizing George Bush's perceived strength on national defense. When Clark entered the race, the cartoonist Garry Trudeau devoted a full week of "Doonesbury" to a Clark homage. In one installment, the character Jeff Redfern reads an article about Clark: " 'A brilliant, telegenic, Southern Rhodes Scholar, decorated Vietnam hero and ex-Supreme Commander of NATO.' Whew! I wonder if Bush has the slightest clue what he may be up against."

Soon after Clark entered the race, though, another Clinton-era general, Tommy Franks, who retired this summer after directing the capture of Baghdad, was asked in a private setting whether he believed that Clark would make a good President. "Absolutely not," Franks replied. Retired General Hugh Shelton was asked the same question after giving a talk at a college in California. Shelton, the former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, was Clark's boss in 1999 when Clark was unceremoniously told that he was being removed from his position as Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. "I've known Wes for a long time," Shelton said. "I will tell you the reason he came out of Europe early had to do with integrity and character issues, things that are very near and dear to my heart. . . . Wes won't get my vote." Shelton has refused to explain how he came to his conclusion.

Clark indicated that he was puzzled by such comments. "I've known Hugh Shelton for years," he said, with a tight

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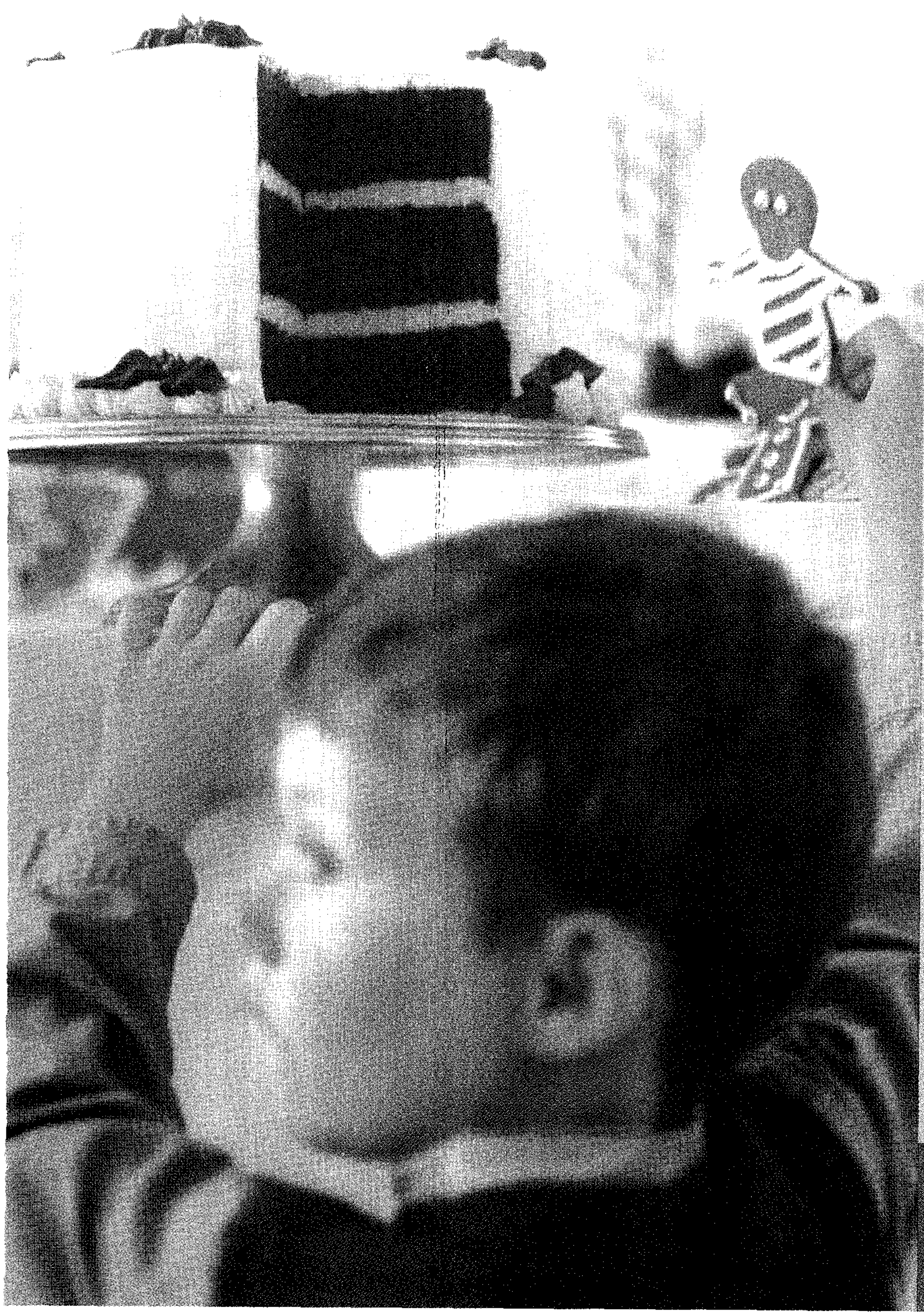

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MARISA ACOCELLA

“Hey—I’d write a book, too, if I could find the time.”

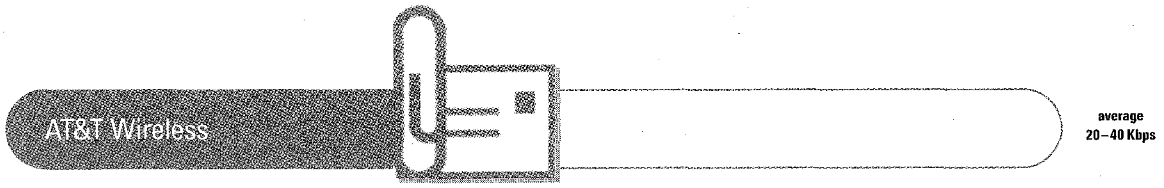
• •

smile. “I always liked him.” The comments of Franks, Shelton, and others in the Clinton-era military and defense establishment suggest a paradox in Wesley Clark’s candidacy for President: his military career, the justification for his candidacy, may also be a liability.

Our conversations began on that flight to Little Rock, as we were squeezed into the rear of a borrowed Beechcraft King Air turboprop. Clark has often been described as tightly wound. He seems almost physically to exude an inner tension. He rarely blinks his eyes. When he does close them, he is able to impose on himself what he calls “sleep discipline,” nodding off instantly in the back of a plane, his arms clinched across his chest, tightly wound even in slumber. Our talk resumed a week later in New York, and concluded a week after that in Los Angeles. The subject was how the war in Iraq, which Clark calls a “historic blunder,” differed from the 1999 war over Kosovo, which Clark commanded. Clark was welcomed into the campaign by many Democrats as the triumphant commander of Kosovo, and he uses the lessons of Kosovo to explain his criticism of the Iraq war. In a speech at the University of Iowa College of Law, on September 19th, Clark had declared that chief among America’s mistakes was that it had gone to war in Iraq without “the mantle of authority” bestowed by United Nations approval. But hadn’t the Kosovo war also been conducted without the endorsement of the U.N. Security Council? Yes, Clark allowed, and in that regard the Kosovo war was “technically illegal.” He went on, “The Russians and the Chinese said they would both veto it. There was never a chance that it would be authorized.” That situation did not seem entirely dissimilar from the prewar maneuverings regarding Iraq, when France and Germany said that they would oppose any Security Council resolution authorizing an immediate war; Bush bypassed the U.N. and resorted to an alliance with Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Britain and sundry lesser members of the “coalition of the willing.” But there was one more important difference, Clark said: the war against Serbia was waged to stop the imminent threat of ethnic cleansing in the disputed province of Kosovo; the war in Iraq, he said, was waged under false pretenses. He then told me—as he has told others—how he came to learn of a secret war scheme within the Bush Administration, of which Iraq was just one piece.

Shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Clark said, he visited the Pentagon, where an old colleague, a three-star general, confided to him that the civilian authorities running the Pentagon—Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld and his team—planned to use the September 11th attacks as a pretext for going to war against Iraq. “They made the decision to attack Iraq sometime soon after 9/11,” Clark said. “So, rather than searching for a solution to a problem, they had the solution, and their difficulty was to make it appear as though it were in response to a problem.” Clark visited the Pentagon a couple of months later, and the same general told him that the Bush team, unable or unwilling to fight the actual terrorists responsible for the attacks, had devised a five-year plan to topple the regimes in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, Iran, and Sudan.

If the basic elements of the story have a familiar ring, it is because Clark’s central contention—that the Bush Administration used September 11th as a pretext to attack Saddam—has been part of the public debate, much discussed in many publications and broadcasts, since well before the Iraq war. It is rooted in the advocacy of an organization called Project for the New American Century, a neo-conservative think tank, whose influential circle—including Rumsfeld, his deputy Paul Wolfowitz, and the defense adviser Richard Perle—had been openly arguing for regime change in Iraq, by military force, if necessary, since 1998. That Rumsfeld turned his attention to Iraq almost immediately after the September 11th attacks was reported by Bob Woodward in his book “Bush at War,” published in November, 2002. Clark, in repeatedly telling his account, seems to suggest that he had special knowledge of a furtive Pentagon plan that would have the Administration “hopscotching around the Middle East and knocking off states,” as he put it. He has acknowledged,



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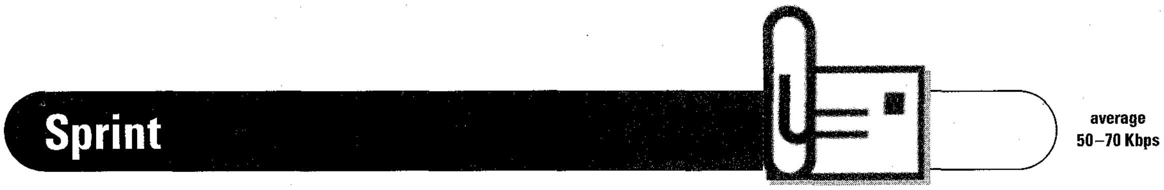

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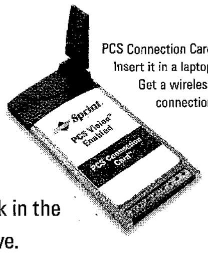

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"I'm not sure that I can prove this yet."

When the Administration began the buildup to war, Clark did not go public with those doubts. He spent much of the war as an expert military commentator on CNN, and writing editorial opinion pieces for various publications. As the liberal media-watchdog group Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting has noted, Clark had reservations about force structure before the war (the oft-heard complaint from military analysts was that Franks didn't have enough troops for a fight with Saddam), but his reservations seemed to fade as American progress became apparent. Clark said that Saddam "absolutely" had weapons of mass destruction, and added, "I think they will be found. There's so much intelligence on this." In an opinion column in the London *Times* on April 10th, Clark predicted that the American victory would alter the dynamics of the region. "Many Gulf states will hustle to praise their liberation from a sense of insecurity they were previously loath even to express. Egypt and Saudi Arabia will move slightly but perceptibly towards Western standards of human rights." Clark praised the Anglo-American alliance, saying that Bush and Blair "should be proud of their resolve in the face of so much doubt."

He called for victory parades down the Mall and Constitution Avenue, and, in another column, cheered the spectacular display of coalition force. "American military power, especially when buttressed by Britain's, is virtually unchallengeable today. Take us on? Don't try!" Such public statements, of course, have made Clark vulnerable to charges by his Democratic opponents of irresoluteness on the war. "He took six different positions on whether going to war was the right idea," Joseph Lieberman complained in the October 26th Democratic debate.

Clark has always been a controversial figure. In the Army, he was known as a brilliant officer and a rare analytical thinker who frequently was able to read a situation that others couldn't or wouldn't see. Yet he also had a certainty about the rightness of his views which led to conflicts with his colleagues and, sometimes, his superiors. Over the years, Clark's defenders have tended to accuse his critics of being hidebound or intellectually less sophisticated. When I asked Richard Holbrooke, who was Clinton's special envoy to Bosnia, about Clark, he said, "Let me start with the central issue, which is why so many military people dislike him. It is extremely simple: jealous generals. And it goes back to way before Kosovo. . . . Wes Clark is a water-walker, Rhodes Scholar, top-of-his-class guy, a classic 'brown-noser' in the eyes of the tougher, more manly men in uniform."

Retired General Dan Christman, perhaps Clark's closest friend in the military, also attributes the hostility toward Clark to the Army's divided culture. "You've got to be able to spit and chew and dip, and wear your cowboy boots, and clip your 'ing's," Christman said. "And, if you didn't do that, somehow you weren't part of the crowd, and certainly you couldn't be a warrior. And that was not Wes."

Still, the antipathy to Clark was real and pervasive. Clark's last three Army jobs, including two at the highest rank, were awarded to him without the Army's recommendation. Clark traces his problems with the Army culture to his days at West Point, and the resentment that he believed his achievement inspired. "In the United States Army, from the time I was a West Point captain, really, I was sort of a marked man," he said, as we talked one day in New York. "There are three terrible things that can happen to you in the United States Army, if you're an officer. You can

"Vodka on the rocks, in the rocks, around the rocks, and under the rocks."

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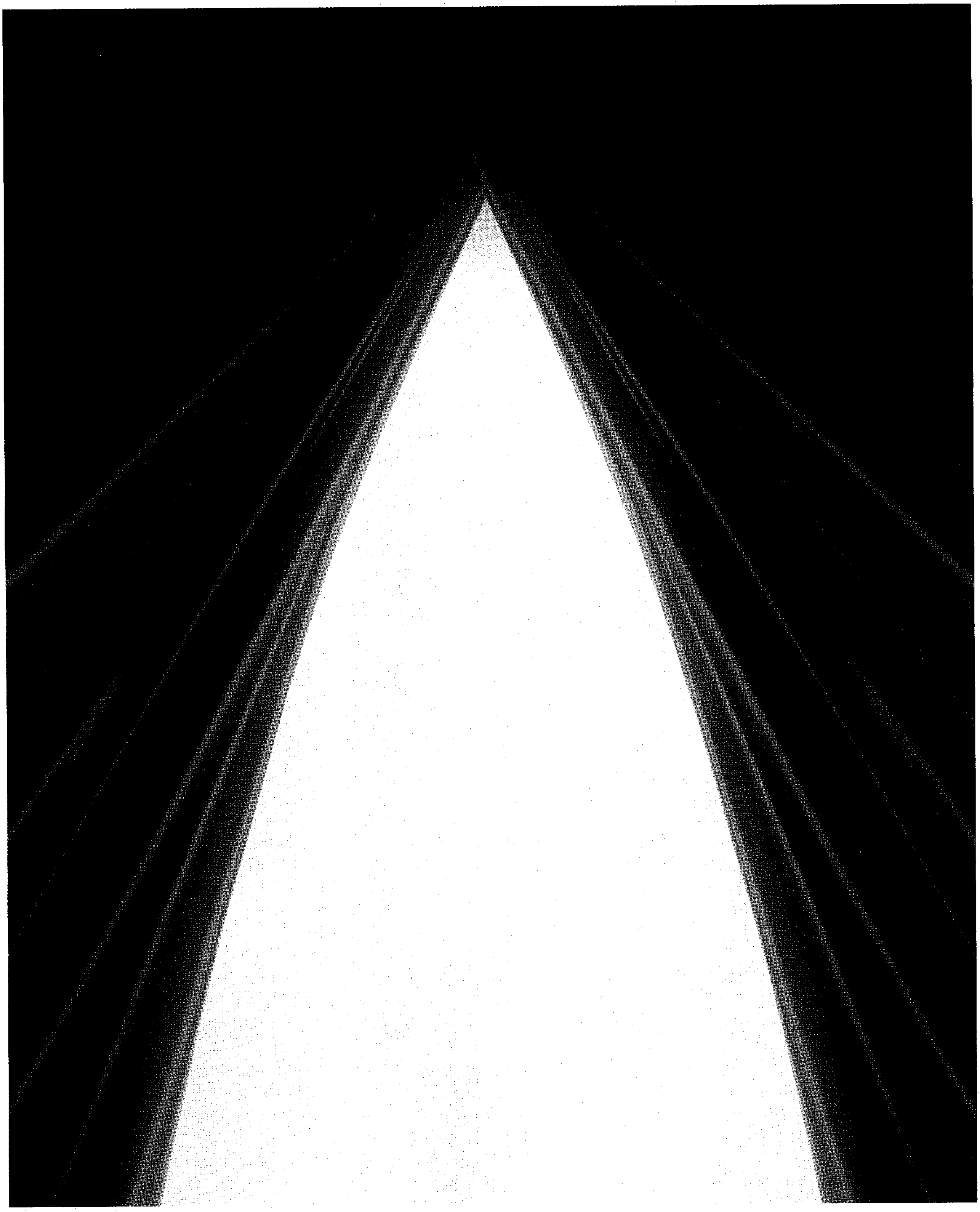

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When Clark became a candidate for President, and when Shelton and others—men unaccustomed to taking personal beliefs public—made disparaging remarks about him, his campaign released a hundred-and-eighty-seven-page file of Clark's military records, dating back to his 1962 letter of appointment to West Point. The records show that from the start of his service career Clark's superior officers conferred on him the most extravagant praise, typically noting in his routine fitness reports that he was an officer of "unlimited" potential. When Clark was just four years out of West Point, one major wrote, "I consider Cpt. Clark's perception to be unmatched by any officer with whom I have served, irrespective of rank or position." Clark was repeatedly described as an officer who demanded perfection from his men, and from himself.

When the Washington *Post* reporter Lois Romano recently asked Clark about the mistrust that some of his peers have expressed, he grew testy. "How do you think I could have succeeded in the military if everybody didn't like me? It's impossible," he said. "Do you realize I was the first person promoted to full colonel in my entire year group of 2,000 officers? I was the only one selected. Do you realize that? . . . Do you realize I was the only one of my West Point class picked to command a brigade when I was picked? . . . I was the first person picked for brigadier general. You have to balance this out. . . . A lot of people love me."

Clark was born in Chicago in 1944. His father was a lawyer and sometime Democratic politician named Benjamin Kanne. His mother, Veneta Updegraff, was an Arkansan, who went to live in Chicago, where she met Kanne. They married and had one child, Wesley. Benjamin Kanne died in his sleep when Wesley was almost four, and Veneta moved back to Arkansas, where she met Victor Clark, a bank vice-president, whom she married, and who raised Veneta's son as his own.

Clark has suggested that, as a boy, he was somehow out of place in Little Rock. When the neighborhood kids played soldier, they always made Wes be a Yankee. He had a speech impediment but overcame it by taking classes at the local Boys Club. The Clarks weren't rich, but they lived on the prosperous side of town, and when it looked as though Wes might miss his first year of high school, in 1959, because of the lingering school-integration crisis in Little Rock, his parents sent him to Castle Heights Military Academy, in Tennessee. When he returned, he enrolled in Hall High School, where he made a mark as an academic achiever. He had a chance at the Ivy League, but he chose West Point. As Clark explains, it was at the height of the Cold War and at the start of the Kennedy years, and patriotic feelings ran high.

At West Point, Clark graduated first in his class in 1966, and he spent the next two years studying and travelling in Great Britain on the Rhodes Scholarship. There he got a foretaste of that bitter awakening which many of his classmates did not experience until years later, when they returned from Vietnam to the social cataclysms that challenged the verities of duty, honor, and country they had learned at West Point. (The Class of '66 paid dearly in Vietnam. Thirty of Clark's classmates died there—the highest Vietnam-fatality rate of any West Point class.) Shortly after Clark learned of the first death of a classmate, Billy Flynn, in 1967, a group of Rhodes Scholars began to question the war. Some of them circulated a letter condemning American involvement in Vietnam, speaking in the name of the Scholars. "I didn't want to be dragged into that," Clark recalled. "I had my classmates fighting. It was as though part of the foundations of our generation, part of what made us who we are, were turned against us. I loved hearing Joan Baez, and Joni Mitchell, people like that. But suddenly they were leading in a way, in a direction, that I couldn't follow. It was painful."

During his sojourn in England, Clark received a visit one day from some relatives of his dead father. They were on their way home to the United States after a trip to Israel, and they said that they wanted Wesley to know about his family. They told him that Benjamin Kanne was the son of a Russian Jew who'd fled to America to escape the pogroms and became a lawyer and a Democratic alderman in Chicago. Clark, who had been raised a Southern Baptist, says that he was not shocked by the discovery—that, in some intuitive way, it made sense. "In Arkansas, there were a number of Jewish families, and I knew many of them growing up," he said. "They were, many of them, associated with the drygoods industry. . . . And I remember feeling, when I was a kid there, I could look at these people and feel a certain kinship of thought with many of them." Clark wanted to learn everything he could about his father. "It completed me," he said.

But Clark's wife, Gertrude, whom he had met while he was a West Point cadet, was a Catholic, and Clark decided to join the Church. He began his religious studies in England. In May of 1969, he shipped out to Vietnam, where he spent the rest of the year as a staff officer at Lai Kae, and completed his conversion through the offices of a priest on the base. In January, 1970, Clark was appointed to command a mechanized-infantry unit. He had been in the field for several weeks when a scout patrol he was with ran into an ambush. Clark was wounded in the shoulder, the leg, the hip, and the hand but managed to direct a counterattack and the patrol's retreat to safety. He was awarded a Silver Star.

After returning to the United States and recovering from his wounds, Clark became one of the rising young career officers who helped transform the Army into an all-volunteer force. He was an officer of superior intelligence and extraordinary ambition, and he advanced quickly. But those qualities alone did not determine a great officer. One institutional view of Clark seemed to be that while he could be of value to the service, he lacked a feel for people—an attribute that counted for much in command positions. The impression of Clark was that his gaze was directed upward, not down—that he seemed more attuned to his own advancement than to bonding with his men. (When I asked Clark how his men would have characterized his command persona, he said, "I'm a person who works very hard. Thinks about the big issues. And takes care of the troops.")

In his 2001 book "War in a Time of Peace," David Halberstam describes the view of an officer who became Clark's most powerful supporter in the military, General John Shalikashvili:

> What the Army disliked about Wes Clark, Shalikashvili believed, was an unusual amalgam of the personal and the professional. For all his obvious talents, he was too brash and cocky, too sure that his way was the right way, and therefore not a good listener and

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> difficult to deal with. In addition, people felt that he was so driven and so absorbed in his mission—far too self-absorbed, it seemed to many of his critics. . . . He lacked the warmth and humanity that truly great commanders need. . . .There was more than an element of truth in that belief, Shalikashvili thought.

An Army officer's career is shaped partly by his own abilities and by a certain amount of luck, but it is also determined to a great degree by which doors the institution decides to open. The institution seems to have felt that Clark was naturally suited to be a staff officer, applying his talents to such tasks as planning and administration. "It is difficult to be an intellectual and to be perceived as being a warrior," Dan Christman said. "And somehow, within the Army, those two are viewed as mutually exclusive things."

When it came time to assign brigade commands, Clark was passed over twice. Years later, when his peers, such as Tommy Franks and Barry McCaffrey, were leading men on the battlefield in Desert Storm, Clark was commanding the Army's national training center in California, his request for a battle command having been denied.

In the assignments Clark did receive, he always excelled. At the Army's Command and General Staff College, where junior and mid-level officers are trained for the upper ranks of the service, Clark once again finished at the top of his class. This accomplishment helped him to land, in August, 1975, a year-long position as a White House Fellow. It was an invaluable posting: he was able to see at close hand the team that was trying to steer the nation after the disgrace of Richard Nixon (for whom Clark had voted) and the emergence from what Gerald Ford called "the long national nightmare." Clark met Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney, and he was exposed to the world of civilian authority, which he found increasingly attractive. Eighteen months later, he was assigned to Europe, where he worked as a speechwriter for the Supreme Allied Commander, Alexander Haig, who was so pleased with Clark's work that he recommended him for the Legion of Merit.

In the summer of 1992, with the Cold War over and the Gulf War won, Clark was given command of the 1st Cavalry Division, at Fort Hood, Texas. It was a prize assignment, and, as far as the Army was concerned, it figured to be the culmination of his career. But one day General McCaffrey visited Fort Hood and mentioned to Clark that he was leaving his position as director for strategic plans and policy for the Joint Staff at the Pentagon. McCaffrey, who had been one of Clark's champions in the Army, said that he would put in a good word for him. It seemed a perfect job for Clark; the Joint Staff existed beyond the parochial bounds of the Army or of any single service, and the planning-and-policy job—the J-5, as it is known—was an important position. A few weeks later, Clark was called to Washington for an interview, and he thought it went well. Afterward, he stopped by an Army personnel office and discovered that he was not the Army's nominee for the position. "Now I was slightly adrift," he later wrote. "Like when you were expecting an A on your report card but got a B-."

As it turned out, because of events in Washington, Clark's career was about to blossom anew. Shortly after Clark took command at Fort Hood, Bill Clinton was elected President. Clinton's relationship with the uniformed military was difficult from the start. The military's top leaders felt that the Clinton people were the unreconstructed peaceniks who had marched in the streets while American men were dying in Vietnam. The Clinton people, for their part, thought that the top military people at the Pentagon—people like the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell—were willfully unhelpful as the Administration tried to fashion a foreign policy that was suitable to the post-Cold War world. The emerging Clinton Doctrine—the belief that American force should be used to intervene in humanitarian crises and on peacekeeping missions in such places as Somalia, Haiti, and Bosnia—provoked sharp political dispute. Much of the uniformed military were against such interventions, and, po-

litically, opposition to the Clinton Doctrine, with its attendant focus on nation-building, became a fundamental tenet of conservatives who would soon support the candidacy of George W. Bush. When Powell's term ended, he was replaced as chairman by John Shalikashvili, who proved to be more attuned to the wishes of the civilian leadership.

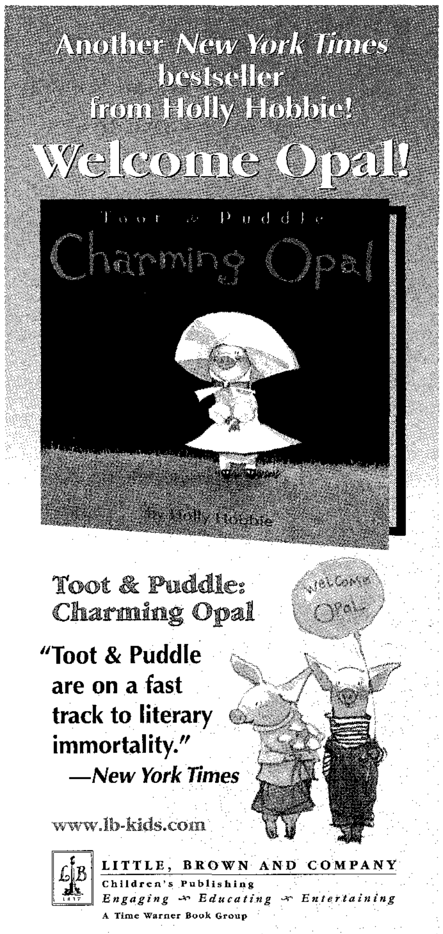
Shalikashvili ignored the fact that Clark hadn't been the Army's top choice for the J-5 position, and gave the job to him. "Clark, more than any other military officer of his rank, was ready to project power in this murky area that we call peacekeeping, or nation-building, or humanitarian intervention," Richard Holbrooke said recently. Clark flourished in the Joint Staff job. It was just the sort of thing he relished—dealing with the larger, fundamental issues of post-Cold War strategy. (As Clark observed, the United States had no clear strategy.) It was a position that gave him a real voice in world matters, and it also brought him into direct working relationships with the top civilian leadership, including Holbrooke. In 1995, Clark became Holbrooke's military counterpart at the Dayton talks, which, after arduous negotiations with Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian dictator, brought peace to Bosnia. Clark and Holbrooke developed a close personal and professional relationship. Holbrooke relied on Clark for military expertise, and Clark learned from Holbrooke the art of vigorous diplomacy. In addition, Clark believed that his work with Holbrooke at Dayton gave him a special insight into the mind of Milosevic, who was the key to the future of the most tumultuous corner of Europe.

The final assignment of Clark's Army career was, at last, equal to his promise and his ambition. In the spring of 1997, the position of Commander in Chief of United States forces in Europe came open. Clark was not the Army's nominee for the post, and the Army Chief of Staff, General Dennis Reimer, refused to recommend him. But Clark had advocates on the civilian side, and the President's newly appointed Defense Secretary, William Cohen, offered him the job.

In Clark's view, the European command was the best in the armed forces. It meant that he would also be in charge of the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, a position bearing the title Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, or SACEUR. The perquisites included the nineteenth-century Château Gendebien, in Mons, Belgium, but what most appealed to Clark was the potential influence inherent in the position. As the American commander in Europe, he reported to Cohen, directly and through Cohen's principal advisers, the Joint Chiefs of Staff. But, as NATO's commander, Clark also reported, on a separate track, to NATO's secretary-general, Javier Solana, and interacted with the military and diplomatic representatives of the organization's nineteen members. This also meant that he had a number of bosses to answer to.

As SACEUR, Clark defined for himself a role with unprecedented latitude. In policy areas, an American military commander's principal purpose is to advise the civilian authority (the Defense Secretary being his first channel) about the military costs and consequences of a particular policy. Clark pushed his advisory role to the point of policy advocacy, and it began to seem to some in Washington that American policy was being partly crafted from Château Gendebien. The Clinton White House was distracted by domestic political concerns (among them, a Republican Congress, Monica Lewinsky, and impeachment), which amplified Clark's influence. Clark became involved in the political side of the turbulent events in the Balkans, which now centered on the disputed province of Kosovo. His superiors at the Pentagon felt there was no reason to believe that America would play a role there; it wasn't America's fight. He felt differently. "Kosovo was simply an extension of Bosnia in the mind of Wesley Clark," Holbrooke said. "For Clark, Kosovo was the logical next step in his liberal interventionist attitude toward the use of force."

The province was populated mostly by Albanian Muslims, who wished for greater autonomy from what remained of Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia. Milosevic was not inclined to yield on Kosovo; indeed, Kosovo had been central to the brutal nationalism that brought him to power. In the face of Milosevic's intransigence, moderate Albanian Kosovars lost sway to extremists. By 1998, a group called the Kosovo Liberation Army, which was considered a nationalist terrorist group by some in the United States government, had begun attacking and killing Serb policemen and civilians in-



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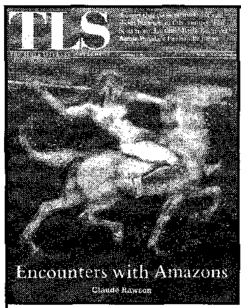

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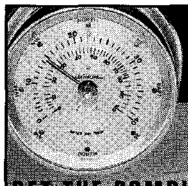
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side Kosovo, in the hope that Milosevic's harsh response would arouse Western intervention on Kosovo's behalf.

In March, 1998, in Prekaz, the Serbs massacred fifty-eight members of the extended family of Adem Jashari, a K.L.A. activist. One victim was beheaded. Clark decided that Milosevic, his old antagonist from Dayton, had to be stopped, and that it was time for a true democracy in Belgrade. He appealed to Washington. "I was told, 'Forget it, we're not interested in what you're saying, we've got too much on our plates back here, you make us nervous,' " he said. To the Joint Chiefs, who cautioned against involvement in Kosovo, the Balkan issue was complicated but the American position was simple. As one of them put it, "The Chiefs never believed that Kosovo, by itself, was vital to the U.S. national interest."

Clark soon began to push his case directly to Clinton's national-security adviser, Sandy Berger. Clark knew that the White House had been advised by Defense Secretary Cohen and the Joint Chiefs to stay out of the Kosovo fight, and Clinton's people, remembering the 1993 debacle in Somalia, were reluctant to use American force in the Balkans. With regard to the Kosovo conflict, even the merits of intervening were open to question. Milosevic was a tyrant, and his retaliations were brutal, but did the United States really want NATO to ally itself with the Kosovo Liberation Army?

Clark, however, seemed to be promising a relatively painless way to break Milosevic: threaten him with the use of force, tell him that NATO will bomb him if he doesn't coöperate, and he will come to the negotiating table and agree to a Kosovo peace. Because of Dayton, Clark was confident that he could read Milosevic. "I knew Milosevic," Clark told me. "I'm the only commander in the twentieth century, I think, that really knew his adversary." Berger asked Clark what would happen if the threats didn't work, and, later, General Joe Ralston, the vice-chairman of the Joint Chiefs, pressed him on the same question.

"I know Milosevic," Clark said, over and over. "It will work."

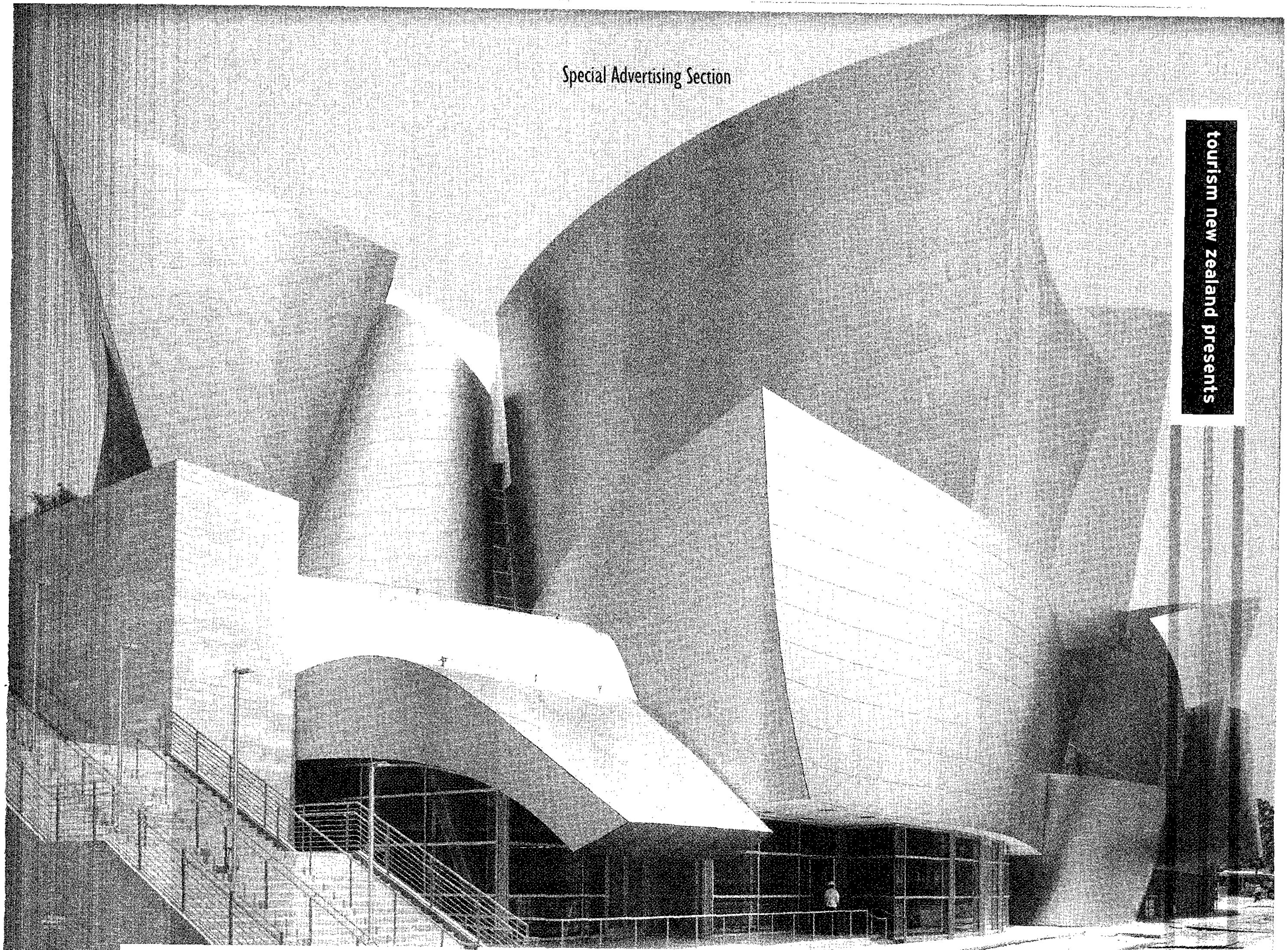
Clark's view, which had the support of Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Holbrooke, prevailed. "I persuaded Sandy Berger that we should run a mission of diplomacy, backed by the threat of force," he recalls. Clark believed in what he called "compellant" diplomacy—coercing the enemy to come to the negotiating table—because he had seen it work at Dayton. But Bosnia had been a republic within the former Yugoslavia, and not an autonomous province, like Kosovo. In Bosnia, a Croatian ground force had scored surprising gains against the Serb forces on its own, and the prospect of NATO bombs tilted the Bosnian field entirely against Milosevic. In Kosovo, there was no meaningful opposition force on the ground; the K.L.A., while growing in size and sophistication with each passing week, was a hit-and-run guerrilla force that Milosevic believed he could eliminate in a few days.

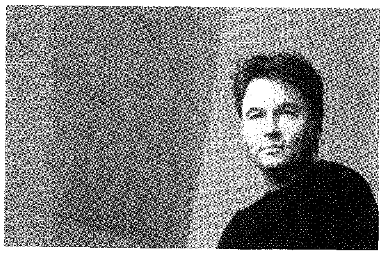
An all-out diplomatic effort got under way in February, 1999, at a palace in Rambouillet, outside Paris. Clark, however, was barred from the palace. Cohen, according to someone who worked closely with him, had come to regard Clark's hiring as one of the worst mistakes of his tenure at Defense, and the relationship between the two men became so strained that one of the Joint Chiefs still groans at the memory of Cohen's tortured body language when Clark would enter the room. What so vexed Cohen and the Chiefs was not just the fact that Clark had routinely gone behind their backs, or that Clark was so unyieldingly certain of his judgment. They believed that, too often, Clark's judgment was wrong.

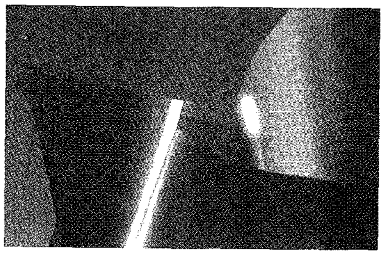
The negotiations went badly. The Albanian Kosovars refused for a time to budge from their position of absolute autonomy, and eschewed the diplomatic niceties. (When Albright flew to Rambouillet in the hope that her presence might help to move things along, the Albanian delegation, working late at night, mistook her for a cleaning woman and told her to go away.) Clark had assured the White House that Milosevic would acquiesce, but the Serbian leader did not, and the talks ended in March.

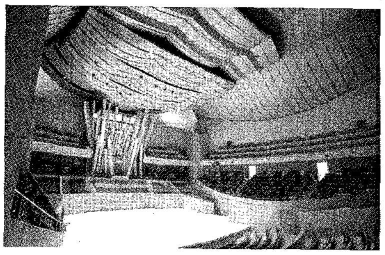
"If you look back at the basics of it," one Clinton Defense Department official recalls, "Wes's strongly held view was 'If we just threaten to bomb, he'll fold, I know this guy. This won't last forty-eight hours.' " Months earlier, when General Ralston had asked Clark what would happen if he was wrong about Milosevic, Clark had responded, "Well, then we'll bomb."

NATO's credibility was on the line, and









VIEW OF DISNEY HALL FROM 2ND AND GRAND AVENUES © TOM BONNER; INSETS *LEFT TO RIGHT:* ESA-PEKKA SALONEN © TODD EBERLE; EXTERIOR DETAIL COURTESY OF THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ASSOCIATION; INTERIOR VIEW FROM SIDE ORCHESTRA © DAVID C. MILLER

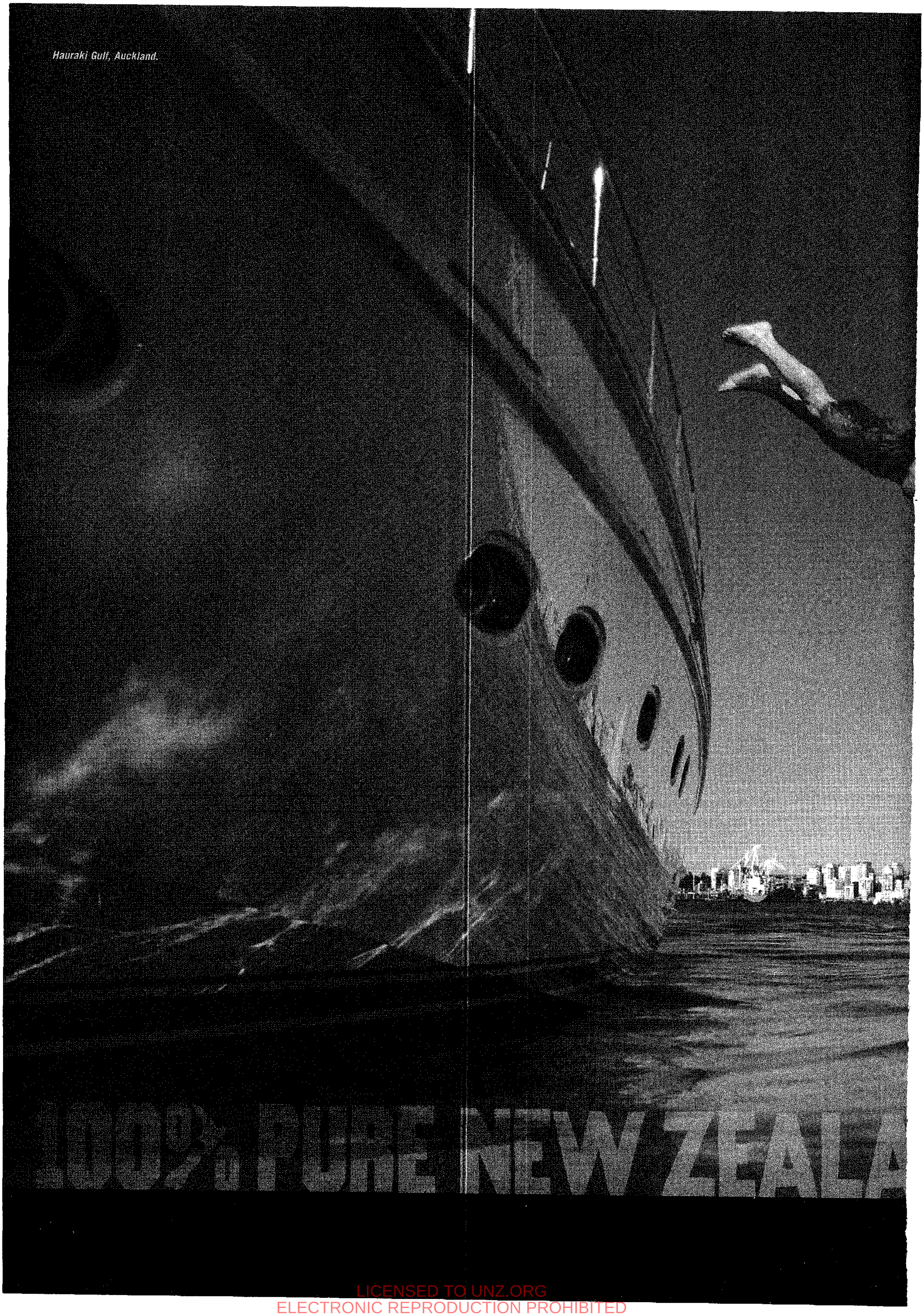
SYMPHONIC SPACE FLIGHT

BY RICHARD J. PIETSCHMANN

"When you look at it . . . this building invites you to dream," says Deborah Borda, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Los Angeles Philharmonic. She's referring, of course, to the brand new Walt Disney Concert Hall in downtown Los Angeles' historic Bunker Hill area. Designed by acclaimed architect Frank O. Gehry, the concert hall's billowing stainless-steel exterior and vineyard-style, terraced seating are an eyeful. Still, Gehry has never regarded this tour de force as just architecture. "I've spent many years designing this building, and for me it was always about the music," he says.

What the new hall can produce in terms of music is what matters to a lot of other interested parties. Philharmonic music director Esa-Pekka Salonen predicts that the 2,265-seat concert hall, with its theatre-in-the-round seating, will ignite Los Angeles music lovers. Borda agrees. "I know Walt Disney Concert Hall will transform the Philharmonic because its sound has changed already," she says. "The vineyard setting joins the musicians and audience together in a way I've never seen. I think the hall will change the way people hear music."

The dynamic acoustics are the result of a fruitful collaboration between Salonen, Gehry, and acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota of Nagata Acoustics. "The clarity and warmth of the orchestra are really enhanced," says Edward Yim, the Philharmonic's director of artistic planning. "It's a space that can handle both the fortissimo of a roaring orchestra and the delicacy of a single instrument."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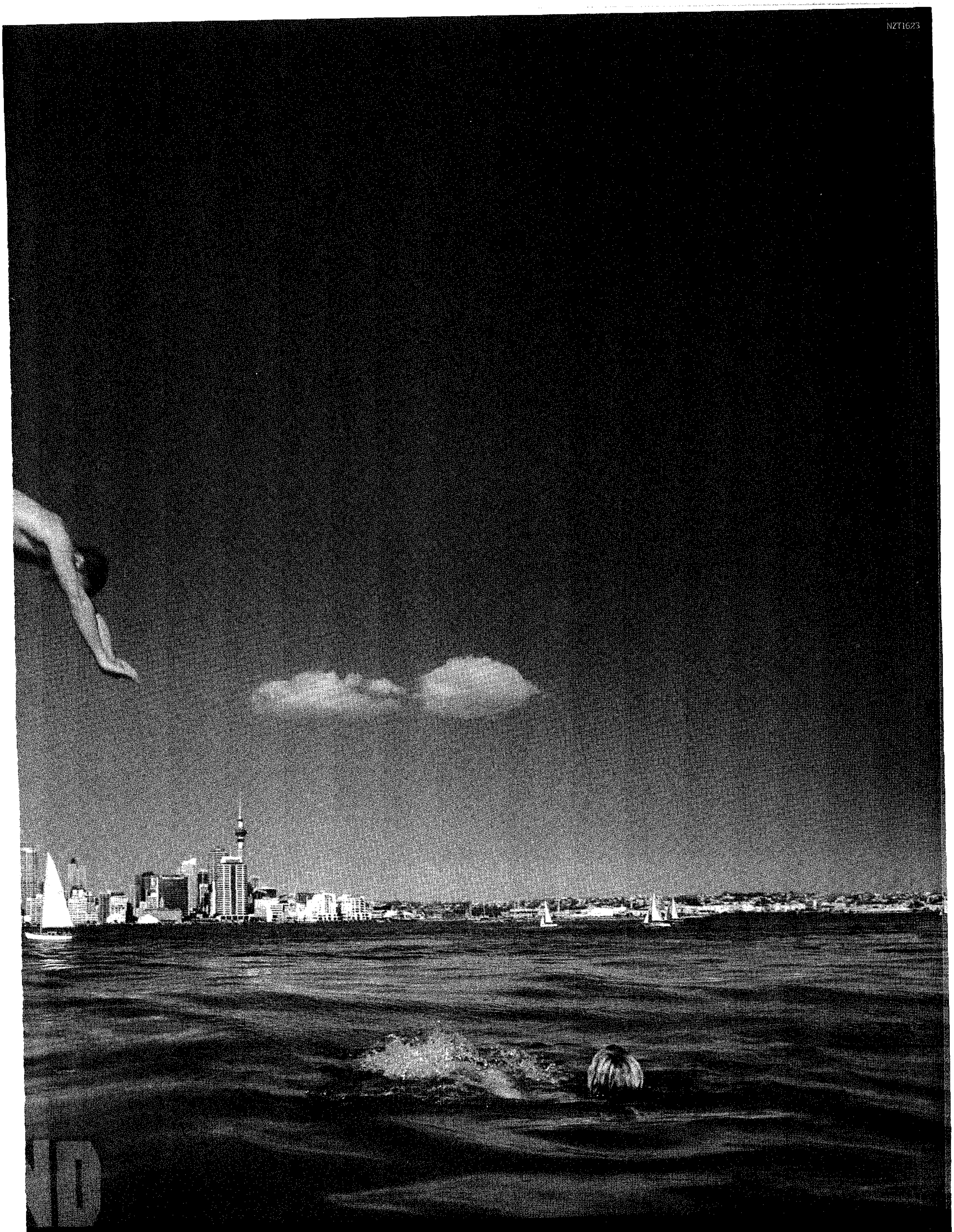

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VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Never before has the Los Angeles Philharmonic offered such an extensive musical menu—expanding from ninety concerts last season to a hundred and fifty for its first season in the new hall. "One of the things we're trying to do is redefine what orchestral concerts are," says Borda. For example, London's Théâtre de Complicité will collaborate with Salonen and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. And in January, Simon McBurney's experimental theatre ensemble will examine the life of Hector Berlioz through the composer's signature work, "Symphonie fantastique."

SERIAL INSPIRATION

Acoustical range is why the new concert hall can host such a wide array of compositions, and jazz vocalist Dianne Reeves knows this firsthand. Her stirring a cappella "Star-Spangled Banner" was the first piece heard at the gala opening in October. Reeves has programmed a new jazz series that will take full advantage of the sparkling acoustics. "The beauty of the hall," she declares, is that "you can hear musicians whispering to each other from the back rows, and that intimacy makes the hall really wonderful for jazz music."

DIANNE REEVES © CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE/BLUE NOTE RECORDS; ESA-PEKKA SALONEN AND *TOP RIGHT* COMPOSER TAN DUN IMAGES COURTESY OF THE LOS ANGELES PHILHARMONIC ASSOCIATION

Other topics for exploration and discovery are "Creation Festival," "Building Music," and the "Berlioz Bicentennial"—three festivals that begin early in the season and run until June. "There is no more appropriate theme than creation," says Salonen, "as we witness the birth of this unique concert venue." Festival works pay tribute to the visionary energy that inspires great buildings like Gehry's, which in turn evoke transcendent music. One piece, Monteverdi's "Vespers," was written for Venice's Cathedral San Marco and Berlioz's "Requiem" was created for the chapel of Les Invalides in Paris.

Seven series adorn the season. Radio host Tom Schnabel of KCRW has programmed a world music series that will bring Cape Verdean vocalist Cesaria Evora and Portuguese fado singer Mariza to town. The six programs in the Friday evening series feature works by composers who challenge the status quo, conductors who push orchestras to signal achievements, and artists who soar above convention. On January 16th, Swedish mezzo-soprano Anne Sofie von Otter will insert into the middle of an all-Berlioz program some "very intimate songs just for voice and piano," reports Yim, who concedes that "it's above and beyond what symphony orchestras usually do."

Salonen has composed a brand new work for the hall entitled "Wing on Wing." The piece takes inspiration from a unique architectural feature of Gehry's design. If you stand on the northeast corner of the property, across from the main entrance, the soaring steel panels resemble the mainsail and jib of a sailboat heading directly toward you. In sailing parlance, explains Gehry, this perspective is called "wing on wing." The world première of Salonen's composition will bring Disney Concert Hall's first season to a close in June.

The kind of programming offered at the new venue is "absolutely unlike any other major symphony orchestra," acknowledges Borda. But, "it's probably the shape of what music associations will be in the future, if they're really going to thrive," she muses. And that is quite a dream.

For information or tickets for the début season of Walt Disney Concert Hall, call 323-850-2000 or visit www.laphil.com.

SONIC ADVENTURES DEFY BORDERS

The début season of the Walt Disney Concert Hall is bursting with wildly innovative programming—no better exemplified than in its "Adventure Series," which features composers and musicians who take art to its limits. Mindful of the bold spirit of adventure that typifies New Zealand and its own innovative approach to the arts, **Tourism New Zealand** (newzealand.com) will host the Adventure Series' first concert on November 14th. Peruvian-born Miguel Harth-Bedoya, one of the most exciting young conductors on the international scene, will be on the podium for the Adventure Series' fourth concert in February. Harth-Bedoya is the associate conductor of the Los Angeles Philharmonic and also the Music Director of the Auckland Philharmonia, an esteemed orchestra renowned for accompanying the likes of the legendary Bolshoi Ballet, Sadler's Wells Royal Ballet, and St. Petersburg Ballet, as well as for its regular appearances with New Zealand opera and ballet companies.

As the warmer climes return to New Zealand, likewise the island nation's cultural calendar will heat up with a roster of special events. The **New Zealand International Arts Festival** (nzfestival.telecom.co.nz) will take place from February 27 to March 21, 2004, in Wellington, the arts capital. Three consecutive weeks will be packed with more than a hundred literary arts, visual, and performing events ranging from classical to modern and encompassing both Eastern and Western styles. Tan Dun, one of the world's leading composers, and recently acclaimed for his Oscar- and Grammy-winning score of Ang Lee's "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," will conduct three of his works. Donizetti's "L'elisir d'amore," the first comic opera the festival has staged in its twenty-year history, will be presented, and a Maori work, "The Prophet" by celebrated playwright Hone Kouka, is also scheduled.

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the Joint Chiefs now had to agree that America's vital interests were at stake. They would support war, and the American air commander in the region, Air Force General Michael Short, had been planning for just such an eventuality. Months earlier, Short had presented to Clark his team's plan for a classic air campaign, one that would hit Milosevic hard and fast. The first strikes would take down the Serb air-defense system, followed quickly by bombing attacks against what Short called the "strategic target set"—the country's power grid, communications systems, key bridges, routes in and out of Belgrade, and a half-dozen military command centers. To Short's dismay, Clark did not approve the plan. Clark had his own reasons. He knew that direct hits against Belgrade would never be approved by NATO's member nations. His hope was that, once the ineffectiveness of a more limited campaign became apparent, NATO would agree to a bombing escalation.

This was NATO's first war. Fifty years earlier, NATO had been designed as a defense alliance, holding the line in Europe against Soviet aggression. Now, in an offensive campaign, it could only wage war by committee; the process was so unwieldy that it became, to future American Defense officials, an object lesson in how not to fight a war.

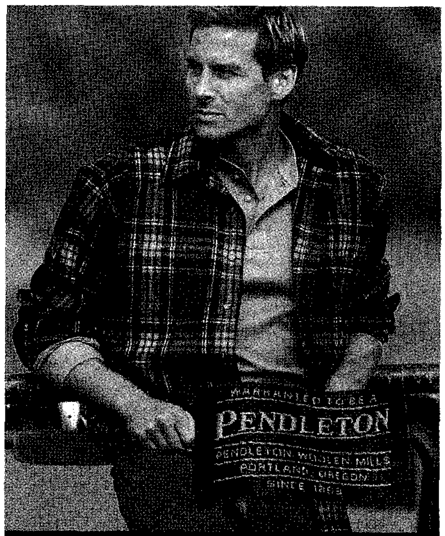
President Clinton had publicly ruled out sending ground troops into the Balkans, and the NATO governments agreed. ("Saying in his initial speech to the nation that ground troops would not be needed was one of Clinton's biggest foreign-policy errors," Holbrooke says.) Each of the nineteen member nations had what amounted to veto power over any aspect of the air campaign, a situation that so attenuated the NATO offensive that it almost crippled it. If one member's government couldn't withstand the prospect of bombs falling on Belgrade, then Belgrade targets were off the list; if another ally objected to taking down Milosevic's electricity grid, fearing images of civilian suffering in the Balkan winter, then the grids were off the list, too. On at least one occasion, pilots found out that their intended target had been removed from the NATO "approved" list as they were taking off on a bombing sortie. This meant that much of the early air war was conducted in Kosovo itself, a scenario that had NATO bombers trying to hit Serb tanks from fifteen thousand feet, to little effect. It didn't help that a French major at NATO headquarters leaked a potential NATO target list to the Serbs. Short hated this kind of war—"tank plinking," he called it—and refused even to refer to it as an "air campaign." More than once, he came close to quitting his command in frustration. Short had complained to Clark about the lack of targets, but Clark assured him, "This will be over in three nights."

NATO was unprepared for even this restricted version of war. There were no American aircraft carriers nearby when the war began, and only a third of the aircraft that would eventually be required. Milosevic had positioned his forces on the Kosovo border, and when the bombing commenced they swept into the province and dispersed, thus avoiding the long-distance strikes of the NATO bombers. As the Serbs moved in, the Albanian Kosovars moved out, nearly emptying the country in an exodus to the hills, and subsequently posing a humanitarian crisis in the neighboring states of Albania and Macedonia.

When Milosevic refused to fold after just a few days of bombing, the NATO bombers quickly ran out of approved targets, and were failing to destroy, or even to seriously erode, the Serb force inside Kosovo. The bombing seemed to have accelerated the very ethnic cleansing that it was supposed to have prevented; after a month of bombing, nearly a million Kosovars had been displaced. Worse, the long-distance attacks inevitably caused collateral damage. A refugee convoy was mistaken for a Serb armored formation, and was hit by a NATO bombing; a passenger train was hit as it crossed a bridge; several hundred civilians were killed, and the images of unintended carnage were broadcast by the international news media. It began to look as if NATO, outlasted by a canny and determined foe, might actually lose its only war.

Clark decided that NATO had to intensify the bombing and to prepare for a ground invasion of Kosovo. Actual ground war, as against preparing for it, was an unlikely prospect at best, opposed by almost all of the allies and expressly precluded by President Clinton, but it consumed Clark's thinking for the rest of the war, and was the cause of his final, irreversible estrangement from Washington.

As Secretary Cohen and the Joint Chiefs saw it, Clark, in lobbying for negotiations and then for going to war in



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Kosovo, had misread Milosevic twice. Now Clark was advocating the war's escalation, and there was an impression that he would be no more constrained in his advocacy than he had been before. The Pentagon dared not jeopardize a delicate alliance by firing Clark in the midst of a war, but its lack of confidence was clearly conveyed to him.

Clark seemed disinclined to read these signals. In April, 1999, he met with Tony Blair at Clark's headquarters in Belgium, and, with the help of British military advisers, convinced him that a credible threat of ground invasion was necessary to bring Milosevic around. At a dinner with Clinton shortly afterward, Blair pressed the case, and his insistence became a point of contention between the two friends.

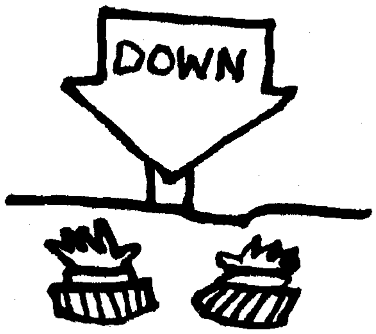
That same month, the many issues of the war came to a head at NATO's summit meeting in Washington. It was a symbolic gathering, marking the fiftieth anniversary of an organization whose continued viability was, at that moment, very much in doubt. Cohen ordered Clark to stay away from the meeting, and relented only at the urging of Clark's other boss, Secretary-General Solano. Cohen then forbade Clark from using the occasion to lobby for a ground invasion; that might have caused an open split in the alliance at a time when world attention was focussed on it. Clark agreed.

On April 23rd, Clark arrived early for the opening session of the summit, and as he entered the reception area he found President Clinton and his national-security team, including Secretary Cohen and Hugh Shelton, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Clark hadn't seen the President for a few months, and was eager to exchange greetings. Then, as Clark recalls in his memoir "Waging Modern War," when he and his political adviser, Mike Durkee, approached the group, the men's body language was so unwelcoming that he could not mistake it:

> I turned away and halted about twenty feet behind and off to the side of the group. I stood with Mike Durkee in the center of the room. There was no place to go.
>
> Then the ushers allowed the first delegations to enter the foyer, and at once I was surrounded by an interested and respectful group of ministers, deputies, generals, and staff assistants from the various countries. Then the heads of state stopped after they came through the President's formal receiving line, making me almost the center of a second receiving line.

Immediately upon returning to Belgium from the Washington summit, Clark conducted a press briefing, in which he explained that he couldn't accurately assess the damage done to Milosevic's ground forces, because the Serbs were bringing in reinforcements, and, "without being there on the ground, it's very difficult to give reliable information." The next day's headlines in American newspapers interpreted Clark's statement as a concession that the air war was failing. Cohen was furious. That night, Clark wrote in his memoir, he was at a retirement dinner for a colleague when he received a call from Shelton. "Wes, at the White House meeting today there was a lot of discussion about your press conference," Shelton said. "The Secretary of Defense asked me to give you some verbatim guidance, so here it is: 'Get your fucking face off the TV. No more briefings, period. That's it.' I just wanted to give it to you like he said it. Do you have any questions?"

What Cohen hoped for was an intensified air campaign, and a diplomatic solution, which he believed was within reach. Nevertheless, Clark continued to focus on preparations for a ground war, and the plan he ultimately proposed was greeted in Washington with astonishment. "Gallipoli springs to mind," one defense expert, who made a study of Clark's plan, says. Clark advocated an invasion of Kosovo with a force of two hundred thousand troops, mostly American. The force would move into Kosovo through Albania, because Macedonia had declared that it would not allow its territory to be used for launching an attack. Aside from the most obvious difficulty with Clark's plan—that a major American-led ground invasion in the Balkans could not win the support of Congress, the Pentagon, the White House, or NATO—there was a real problem regarding Albania. The country was already in chaos, and had almost no infrastructure. There was only one major road, and it was only partly paved, and there were few bridges that could support the mammoth tanks and fighting vehicles of the American Army. If an invasion were to occur on Clark's time line, which was early autumn, the infrastructure would have to be put in place during the summer.

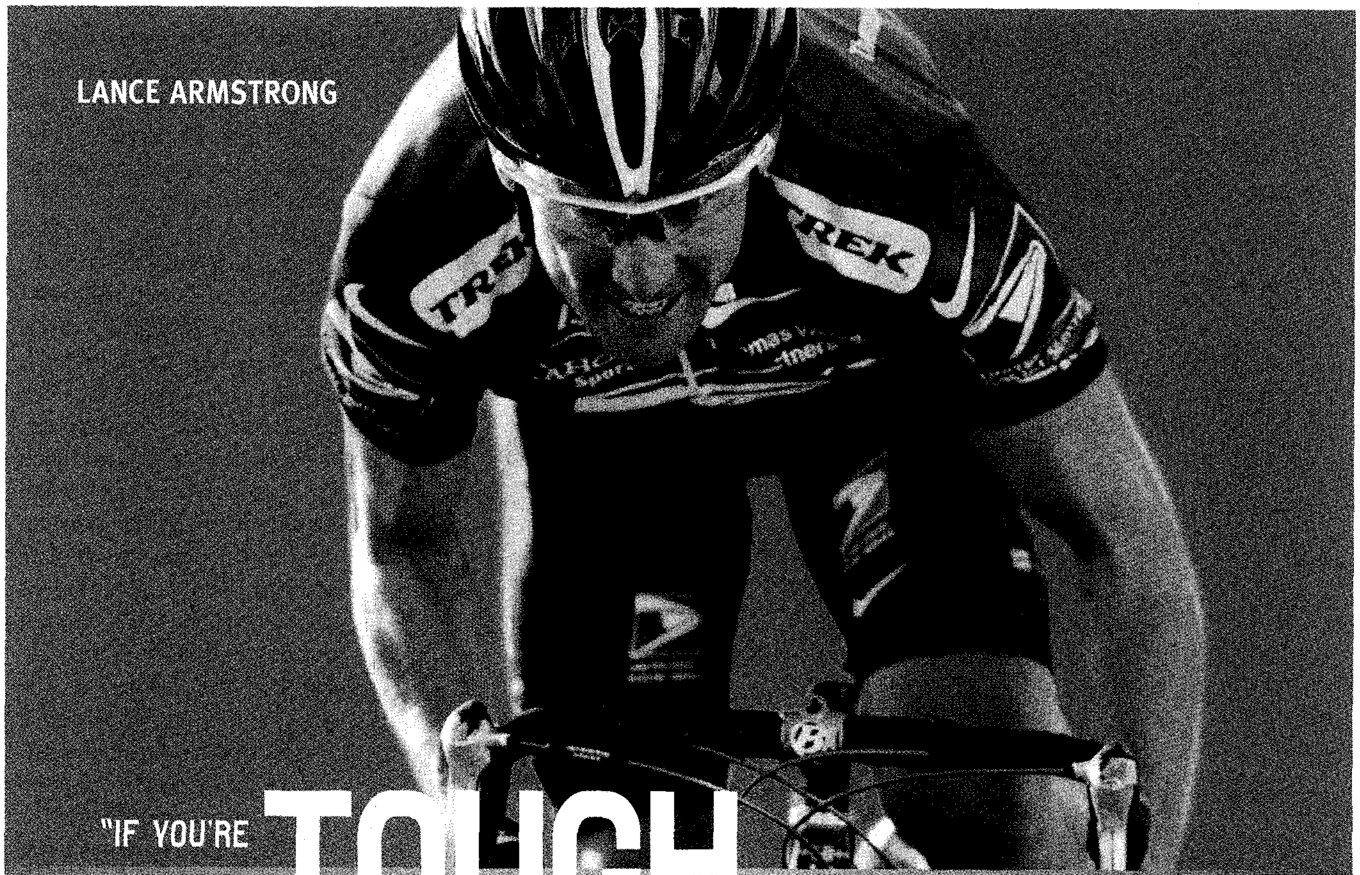


Clark outlined the plan to the Joint Chiefs in a video-teleconference, and they were starkly unsupportive. Dennis Reimer, the Army Chief of Staff, made it clear that he considered Clark's plan ludicrous. General Shelton refused to go forward with any real planning for the invasion. A Clinton Defense official recalls, "Any of those elements of his most expansive plan would have, in our view and in the view of a number of thinking people, derailed what was a fairly fragile situation. And, in the judgment of many, many military professionals, it wouldn't have worked anyway. It called into question the real military judgment being put behind it."

Clark's friend Dan Christman acknowledges that the ground plan may have seemed impractical. "But the question of its feasibility was totally beside the point," he said. "It was as much psychological as it was military. He wanted to convince Milosevic that we were prepared to go in."

In May, NATO agreed to intensify the bombing, allowing strikes against Belgrade. (In one instance, bad intelligence led to the bombing of the Chinese Embassy.) In early June, there was finally a diplomatic breakthrough. The Russians, who had been supporting the Serbs, backed away from Milosevic, and the Serbs agreed to withdraw from Kosovo. The agreement did not provide the Albanian Kosovars with the independence they sought, and it allowed Milosevic to remain in power. A year later, he was voted out of office, and is now on trial for war crimes in The Hague.

Clark learned of the end of his two-year appointment as European commander in July, 1999. He had counted on getting the customary extension of another year, perhaps two, but the ceaseless battles with the Pentagon had precluded it. In Cohen's office, the animosity against him was irreparable. One official who was involved in Clark's hiring acknowledges that disagreements over policy matters and plans are inevitable during war: "But with Wes this became, as with everything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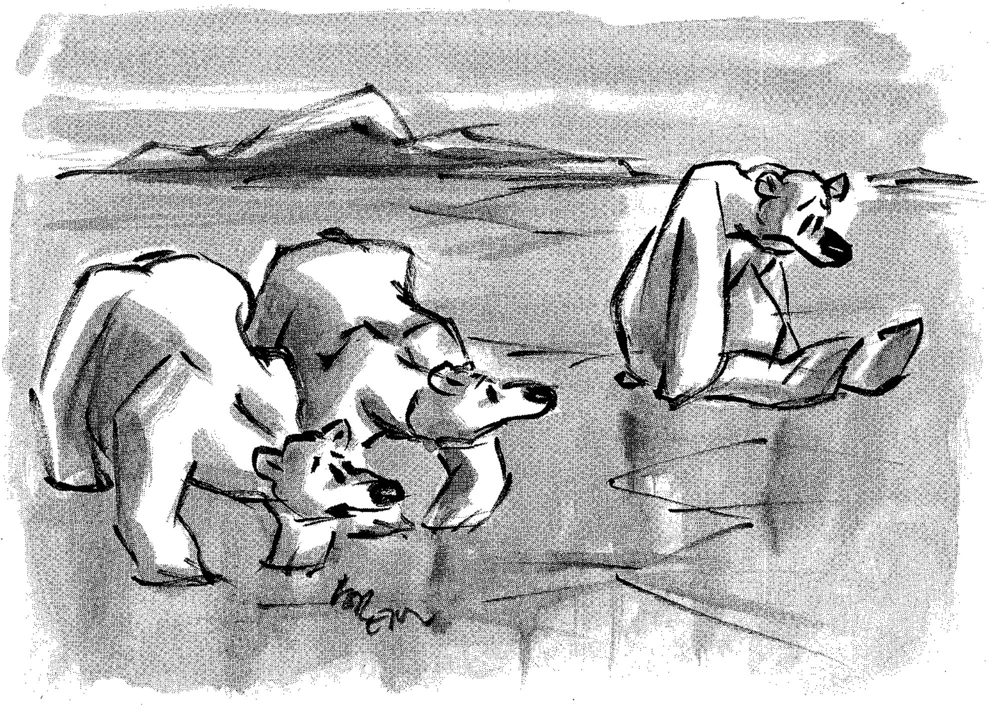


"He's bipolar."

• •

else, the drama of 'Will Wes's moral rightness and brilliance be upheld and observed, or will it be thwarted?' That became the nature of the drama, and if you were one of the people—notwithstanding having been dumb enough to give him the job—who were going to thwart his native brilliance, then you were going to get worked around and have five million other phone calls made, and it just got tiresome after a while."

One evening in July, as Clark was dining with the President of Lithuania, he was summoned to an urgent telephone call from General Shelton. Shelton told Clark that Cohen had decided to remove him from the job in nine months, in order to make way for a new SACEUR, General Joe Ralston. Clark was flabbergasted, and tried to protest, but Shelton rang off. Then Clark received a call from a Washington *Post* reporter, Bradley Graham, who'd been told about Clark's removal. The leak was a cold-blooded, but effective, method of cutting off Clark's escape routes. "He was probably not extended the traditional courtesies of receiving the news in an orderly and private manner," the Defense official said. "Quite simply, we felt he could not be trusted to accept the decision." Clark made a furious round of telephone calls, to no avail.

When I asked Clark how he explained being fired by Clinton after winning a war for him, he said that he didn't believe that Clinton had anything to do with it. The President did indeed sign the order that mandated Clark's early removal from the SACEUR post, but Sandy Berger later explained to Clark that neither he nor the President knew what they were signing. It was, Clark says, a setup, engineered by Cohen's office and by the Chiefs. As for Clinton, "He was hornswoggled."

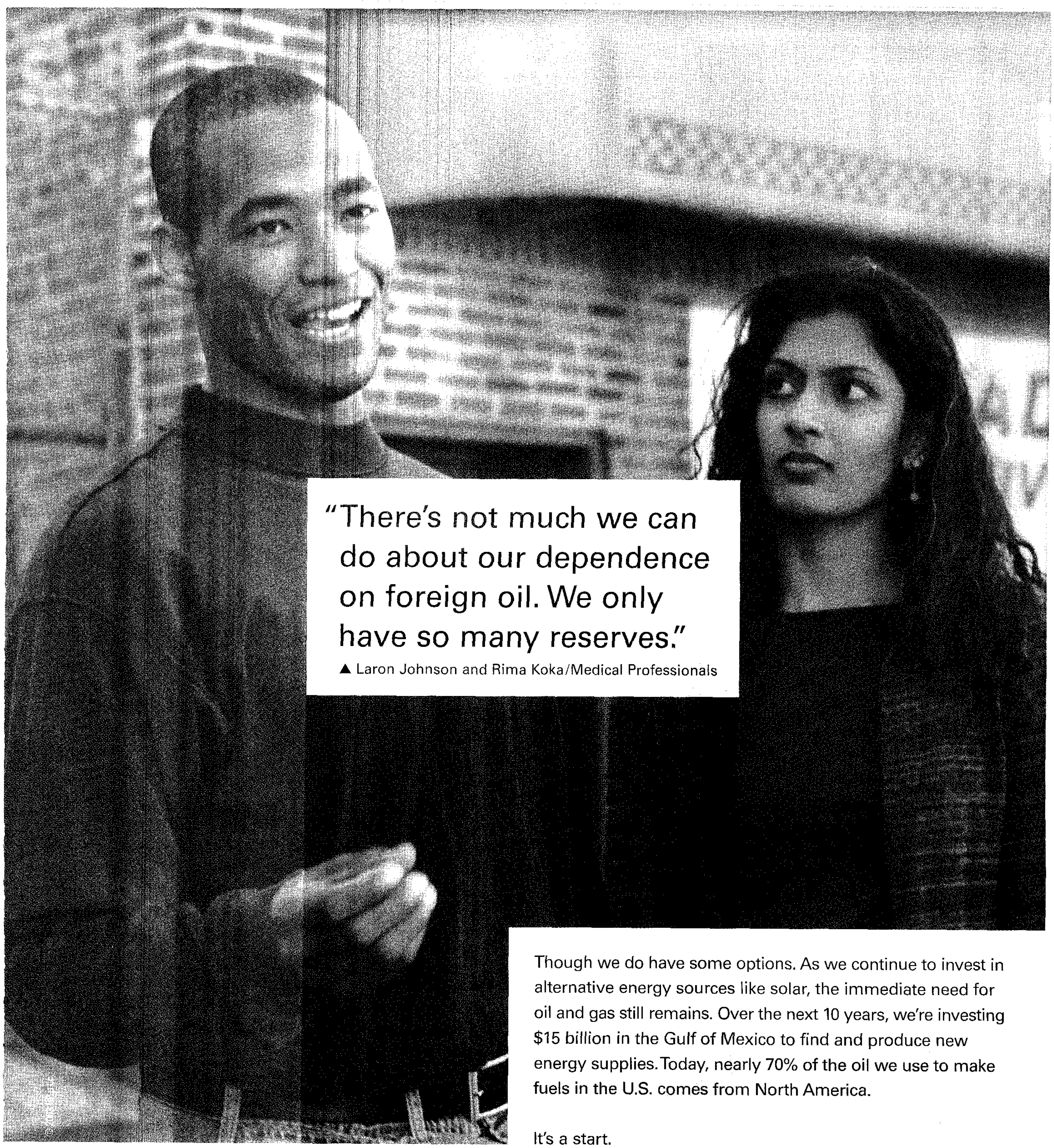
Clark has lamented that Kosovo became a forgotten war, that its ending occasioned no victory parades, no new rush of patriotism. When he came home, he was struck by the fact that many people didn't seem to even know that there had been a war, much less what it had been fought over, or who had won. When Clark began looking for a publisher for his memoir, the major houses didn't seem interested in the story of the hero of Kosovo; one publisher told him, "People don't really care about people like you anymore—generals and people in uniform and people in the armed forces."

The ultimate rejection came, perhaps, during one of Clark's post-September 11th visits to the Pentagon. Clark had begun to describe how he had worked with NATO in the Kosovo conflict when a member of the Defense team cut him off. "We read your book," the official told Clark, "and no one is going to tell us where we can or can't bomb."

After leaving the Army, in 2000, Clark went to work for the Stephens Group, an investment firm in Little Rock that is connected to the Clintons. There he advised on high-tech companies and emerging technologies. But he still had much to say about Kosovo, and, when he became a commentator on CNN and joined the lecture tour, that war was often the lens through which Clark viewed the contemporary world. He spoke of the "lessons of Kosovo," and when he became a Presidential candidate his criticism of the Iraq war was framed by his Kosovo experience.

The Kosovo experience was also partly how George W. Bush defined himself when he was creating a national political profile in 2000. At the time, Bush scorned the use of America's military in the cause of such adventures as the overturning of tyrants, and warned against the hubris of attempting to nation-build in places like Kosovo. In a way, Clark's candidacy is an extension of that argument, with a stark reversal of roles. Now Bush is defending the untidy aftermath of the Iraq invasion, and, because no weapons of mass destruction have yet been found, Bush supporters increasingly justify the war as a humanitarian intervention. Clark, who led a war against a tyrant who brutalized his people, now finds himself opposing the war that overturned Saddam Hussein.

Before Clark became a candidate, he said that he was leaning toward the Democratic Party because Karl Rove never returned his calls. He later said he'd been joking, but some believe that Clark himself would have been happy to have had a role in Bush's war on terror. Last week, Clark called for a new overseer in Iraq, accountable to an international body. Richard Holbrooke, for one, thinks that Wes Clark would have been the perfect choice to oversee the nation-building following George Bush's war. "That is the supreme irony in all this," he said. ♦



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SHOUTS & MURMURS

QUESTIONS FOR PRESIDENT BUSH'S NEXT PRESS CONFERENCE

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

Friendly question: "Sir, although your supporters' predictions that Iraqis would greet our troops with flowers haven't been borne out, isn't it possible that, given the problems with the water supply and the infrastructure in general, there is a serious shortage of flowers over there and that Iraqis might be greeting our troops with flowers if Iraqis had any flowers?"

Follow-up question to friendly question: "Mr. President, in your budget for the reconstruction of Iraq, is there any money specifically earmarked for rebuilding the Iraqi cut-flower industry, and, if so, would any American company be able to bid on that contract, or would they have to go through your friend Joe Allbaugh's consulting firm?"

Zen question: "Sir, if the ability of the Star Wars ABMs to hit a nuclear missile is imaginary and the nuclear missiles in Iraq are imaginary, does that mean a Star Wars ABM could hit an Iraqi nuclear missile?"

Follow-up question to Zen question if answer is yes: "How could that be verified?"

Follow-up question to Zen question if answer is no: "Would you consider that justification for having gone to war against Iraq?"

Strategic-planning question: "Sir, now that you've acknowledged that there was never any evidence of Iraqi involvement in the September 11th attacks by Al Qaeda, does it remain your policy that in the event of any future Al Qaeda attack against this country we would still retaliate against Iraq, and, if so, how would you avoid hitting our own troops?"

Follow-up question to strategic-planning question: "If not, then did you have some other country in mind to retaliate against?"

Coalition question: "Is Bulgaria still part of the coalition, and, if so, what have they done for us lately?"

Follow-up question depending on answer to coalition question: "Would you encourage the American people to drink more Bulgarian wine?"

Follow-up question depending on answer to coalition question: "Would you encourage the American people to boycott Bulgarian wines, and, if so, do you know of any French wines that might make a good substitute?"

Second Zen question: "If, as you've said, Mr. President, the interim report stating that no weapons of mass destruction have been found in Iraq justifies our having gone to war to remove weapons of mass destruction, what would a report stating that weapons of mass destruction *have* been found in Iraq justify, if you know?"

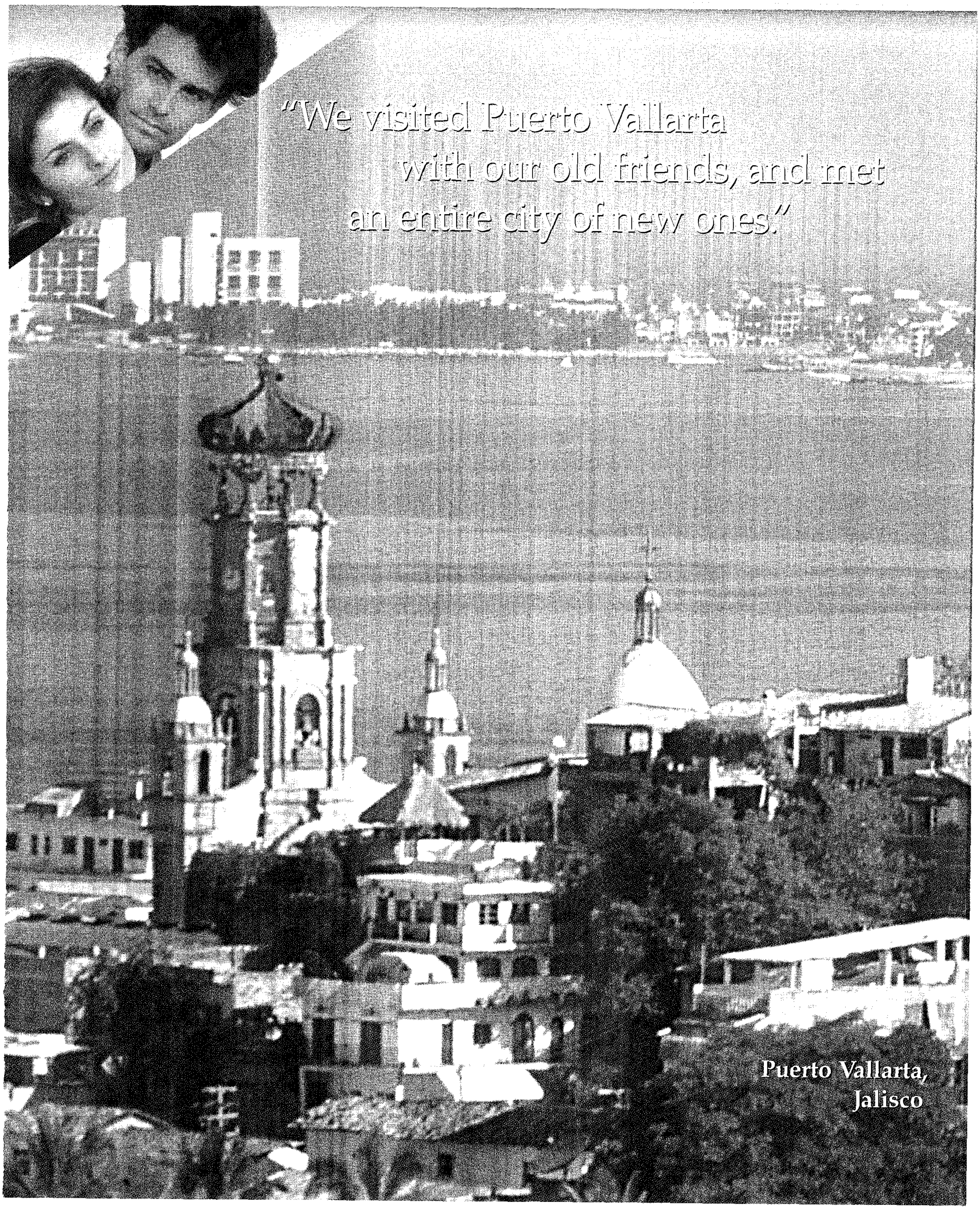
Alternative to friendly question: "Sir, do you think that the flowers with which your Administration said Iraqis would greet our troops will ever be found?"

Follow-up to alternative to friendly question if answer is yes: "Then would that justify having gone to war with Iraq?"

Follow-up to alternative to friendly question if answer is no: "Then would that justify having gone to war with Iraq?"

Somewhat off-the-wall question: "Speaking of Iraq and Al Qaeda, sir, do you think it's fair that Arabs don't have to use a 'u' after a 'q'?"

Follow-up to somewhat off-the-wall question if answer is no: "Then would *that* justify having gone to war with Iraq?" ♦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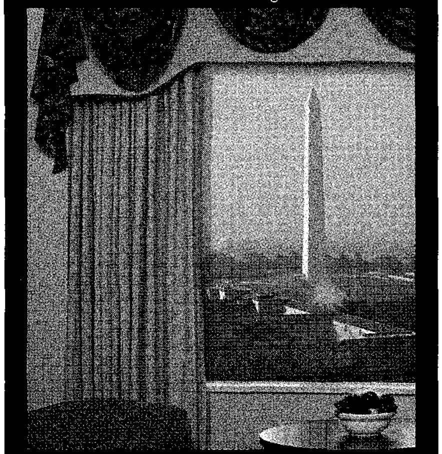

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POPULAR CHRONICLES

ANIMAL ACTION

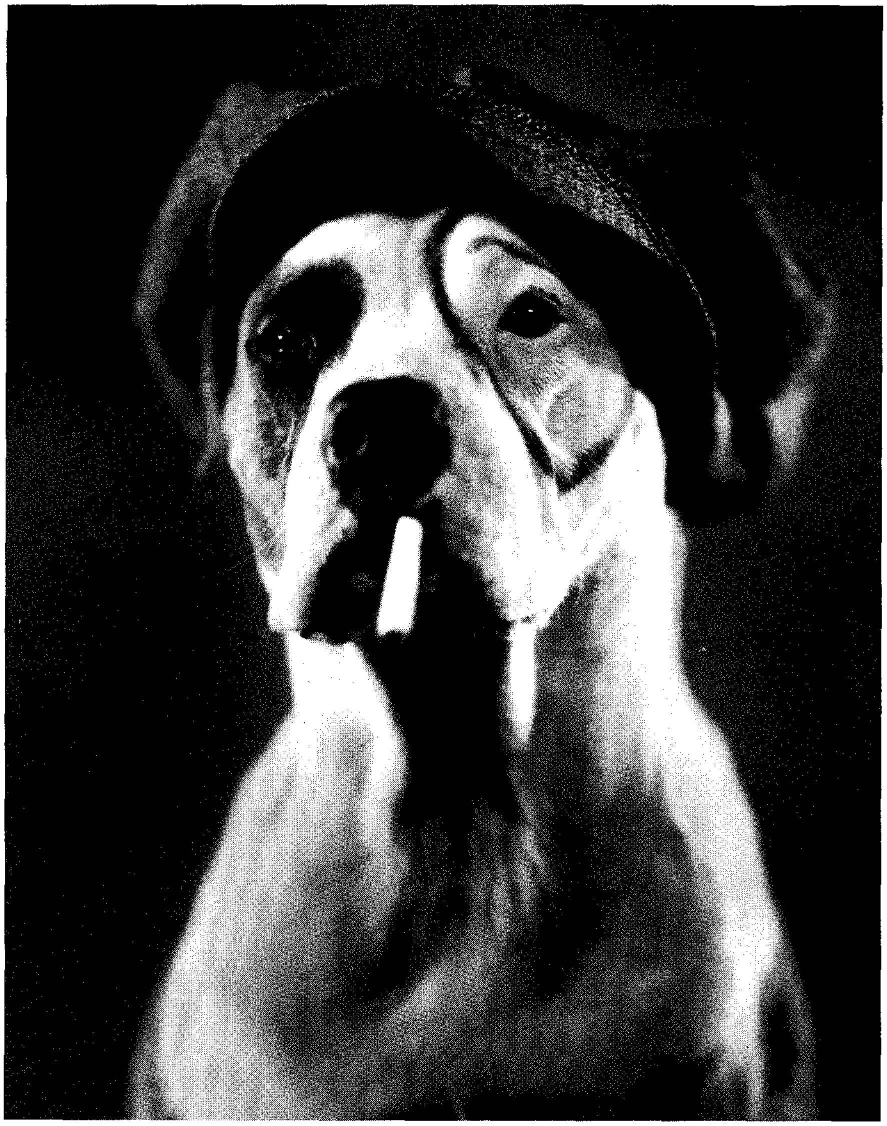
The movie-star treatment for nonhumans.

BY SUSAN ORLEAN

According to the American Humane guidelines, no animal actor should have to work like a dog. For instance, if an ape is on set for more than three consecutive days the production must provide a play area or a private park where the ape can exercise and relax. When a bear is working on a film, anything that produces smells that might bother the bear—cheap perfume, strong liquor, jelly doughnuts—must be removed from the location. Only cats that like dogs should be cast in cat-and-dog movies. No individual fish can do more than three takes in a day. Also, under no circumstances can a nonhuman cast member be squished. This rule applies to all nonhuman things, including cockroaches. Karen Rosa, the director of American Humane's Film and Television Unit, was discussing this particular guideline one day last summer. "If you show up on set with twenty-five thousand cockroaches, you better leave with twenty-five thousand cockroaches," she said. I wondered if she extended the same welcome to cockroaches at home. "A cockroach in my kitchen is one thing," Rosa said. "A cockroach in a movie is an actor. Like any other actor, it deserves to go home at the end of the day."

The Film and Television Unit headquarters are in Sherman Oaks, about twenty minutes from Hollywood, in a squat concrete building shaded by a highway overpass and a stand of gnarled banyan trees. The place is as homely as an orthodontist's office, although it is decorated with movie posters and a nice photograph of Francis the Mule. A wirehaired, baby-faced mutt named Lulu has the run of the office, and staff members wander in and out between visits to soundstages and locations. There are thirty full-time and part-time field representatives of the Film and Television Unit, which is the official monitor of animals in all Screen Actors Guild productions. Keeping an eye on animal actors is a mighty undertaking. In the past twelve months, more than fourteen hundred SAG scripts included some kind of animal action, ranging from ants in a television picnic scene to movies featuring hundreds of horses. During the week I spent with Film and Television Unit staff, there were tigers doing insert shots for "The Last Samurai"; owls, cats, rats, and dogs working on "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban"; a miniature horse doing a guest appearance on "That '70s Show"; full-sized horses at work in "Around the World in 80 Days," "On the One," and "Deadwood"; a frog shooting scenes for "Cinderella"; some deer working on "Thumbsucker"; cats and dogs rehearsing for the sequel to "The Truth About Cats and Dogs"; and spiders auditioning for "Constantine." The Film and Television Unit keeps track of all of these. Even fake animals and dead animals are the unit's responsibility. If animals used in a movie are frozen or stuffed or shown as a food product—say, a haunch of beef—the unit requires proof that they showed up on set that way.

Most of the people who work for the Film and Television Unit are former veterinary technicians or zookeepers or horse trainers; many are graduates of the Moorpark College Exotic Animal Training and Management Program, in Moorpark, California, which bills itself as "America's Teaching Zoo." Even though the Film and Television reps spend their days reading scripts and visiting locations, they think of themselves as being in the animal business rather than in the movie business, much the way that barbers in the Navy probably think of themselves as being in the hair business rather than in the boat business. The truth is actually somewhere in between: being part of the Hollywood animal world is a slightly bizarre confection that affords you such insights as the fact that Cameron Diaz is really good with monkeys and that Wilma the alligator, after a long career in medium-budget films, is now a taxidermied entryway ornament in Brockett's Film Fauna, in Thousand Oaks. One morning, I asked a field rep who supervises movies featuring horses if she liked having a job where she got to know a lot of movie stars. She thought about it for a moment and then said, "You know, it's been great, because I feel really attached to some of them. There's Rusty, who is one of my favorites, and there's Johnny, and one I really, really like named Pumpkin."



American Humane has guidelines for all animal actors: dogs, cats—even worms.

J. ELDEE HESTER/HULTON GETTY

Animals used to have a rotten time in Hollywood. The few animals who were stars did get deluxe treatment—Rin Tin Tin, for instance, had his own valet and chauffeur, and Jackie the Lion, who appeared in silent films with Mae West, Mack Sennett, and Gloria Swanson, lived on a diet of prime beef and vanilla ice cream. But background animals were considered cheap, accommodating, disposable props rather than living things. Horses got the roughest treatment: they were tripped, shocked, raced into open trenches, run ragged. To make a horse fall on cue, wires were strung around its ankles or threaded through holes drilled in its hooves so that the rider could just yank the wires and pull the horse up short. In 1924, six horses were killed during the filming of "Ben-Hur"; in 1935, a hundred and twenty-five horses were wire-tripped in "The Charge of the Light Brigade," and twenty-five of them were killed or had to be euthanized. Four years later, in the Henry Fonda movie "Jesse James," a blindfolded horse was ridden onto a greased chute teetering on a high cliff above Lake of the Ozarks and then pushed out of the chute in order to get a shot of a cowboy on horseback jumping into the lake. The horse broke his back and had to be destroyed. Only the first frames of the shot were used in the film, but the entire sequence of the animal—hunched, helpless, stiff-legged—plunging toward the water is nightmarish. American Humane, which had been founded in the late nineteenth century as an animal- and child-welfare organization, reviewed the footage and circulated a report reproaching the movie industry for its practices. The next year, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (which later changed its name to the Motion Picture Association of America) added a section to its production code prohibiting the use of tilt chutes and trip wires, and American Humane opened a Hollywood office to enforce the new standards. Besides supervising the care of animals on sets, it also promoted animal actors: in 1951, it instituted the Performing Animal Top Star of the Year award—Francis the Mule was the first PATSY winner—and, in 1973, it created the Animal Actor's Hall of Fame, whose first inductee was Lassie.

In retrospect, provisions for animal care on movie sets was a strange fit with the production code, which concerned itself with the content of films rather than with the process of filmmaking by laying out restrictions on nudity, kiss duration, and the use of risqué words like "hell" and "tomcat" onscreen. In the nineteen-fifties, a series of Supreme Court rulings challenged the constitutionality of the production code on First Amendment grounds, and this led to the dissolution of the Hays Office, the censorship arm of the M.P.A.A., which administered the code. It also had the unintended consequence of ending American Humane's authority to supervise animal care on film sets. After the closing of the Hays Office, a few productions still allowed American Humane representatives on set, but most did not. There were still hundreds of movies and television shows being made that featured animals—in fact, it was a boom period for Westerns—and, according to Rosa, standards of animal

"No. Now all of our pillaging is done electronically from a centralized office."

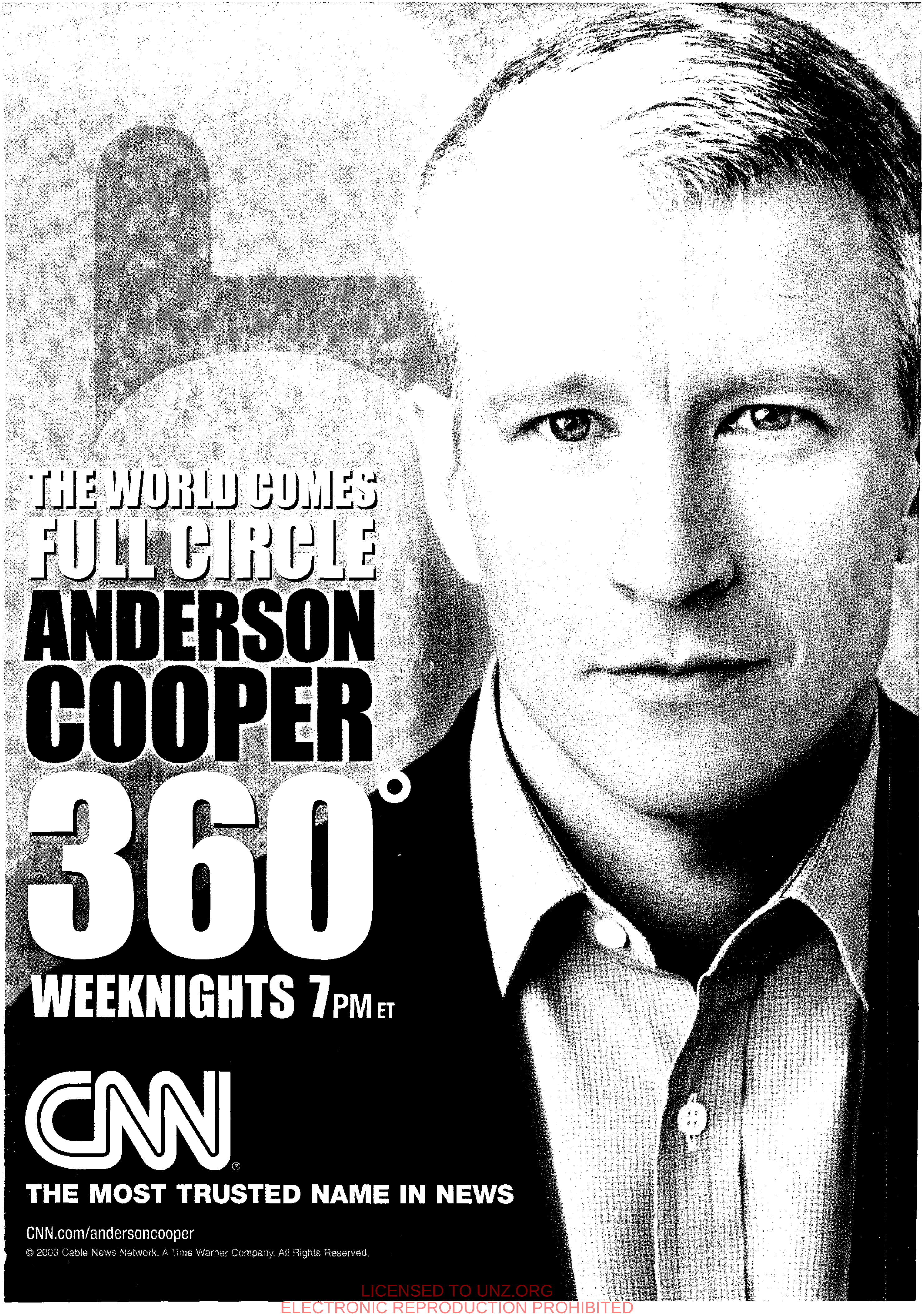
• •

safety were even lower than in the years before the M.P.A.A. code was established. "Missouri Breaks," "Heaven's Gate," and "Apocalypse Now," for instance, all had incidents in which animals were killed; "Heaven's Gate" featured real cockfights, and chickens were decaptiated for the use of their blood.

In the late seventies, actors and crew members began agitating to have standards reinstated. "Hollywood, once cruel to its animal actors, has learned the far-reaching value of a lump of sugar and a pat on the nose. . . . My pet palomino, Trigger . . . the most perfectly trained equine in films today, has not been subjected to cruelty," Roy Rogers wrote in an opinion piece for the Los Angeles *Examiner* in support of monitoring the film industry. "He has been handled with kindness, intelligence and patience. . . . After Trigger and I complete a scene I always have a chat with him. And I think he knows what I say. Gene Autry's horse, Champion, Tex Ritter's horse, Flash, and Bill Elliott's horse, Thunder, also probably know what Gene and Tex and Bill have said to them. These horses don't know cruelty." The agitation finally had results: in 1980, the Screen Actors Guild / Producer's Agreement was amended to include rules requiring the proper treatment of animals, and American Humane was once again authorized to oversee animal actors in film, television, commercials, and music videos, and to issue, or withhold, the trademarked end credit "No animals were harmed in the making of this film."

A lot of people think that American Humane oversees the content of movies instead of just the way they're made. "We get tons of calls and e-mails complaining about what's in movies," Karen Rosa said. "People don't understand that we're not telling producers what the movie should be about. We're just watching to see how it gets done." After a mouse was stomped to death in "The Green Mile," the Film and Television Unit received dozens of calls, although its Web site detailed the use of stuffed and computer-generated mice in the stomping scene. Sometimes, though, even the Film and Television Unit staff are fooled. After supervising the production of "O Brother, Where Art Thou?," Rosa and her staff watched a final cut of the movie and were horrified to see a scene of a cow being hit by a truck. When she called the producers to object, they were delighted, because, as they explained to Rosa, the scene was computer-generated, and they figured that if they'd fooled the Film and Television Unit they had done a good job. The movie got an "Acceptable" rating from American Humane; the review on the Web site goes to great lengths to explain the scene: "One of the cows appears to be hit by the car and falls down. This sequence was accomplished by attaching a cable to the car so that no contact was ever made with the animals. In fact, the car is never less than 25 feet away from the cows. When the cable is pulled, the car comes to a hard stop, creating the effect of hitting an object. The cow was actually computer generated in post production."

American Humane's authority extends only to SAG productions; independent and foreign films are outside its reach. Even though following its guidelines can be very expensive, producers want the "No animals were harmed" end credit and a positive review on its Web site, which is seen by almost half a million people a month. Before releasing Pedro Almodóvar's "Talk to Her" in this country, Sony asked American Humane to review it even though the studio knew that it would not get an end credit, because the movie includes actual bullfighting scenes. It was an unusual circumstance: the bullfighting scenes were "documentary"—that is, they were shot at the graduation ceremony at a bullfighting school in Spain that was taking place regardless of the filmmaking, and not a fight that was staged for the purposes of the film. Also, bullfighting is not considered animal cruelty in Spain. Still, there was no doubt that animals were harmed in the film: the bulls shown are real, and they did die. "We



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gave it a 'Questionable' rating," Rosa said. "There wasn't really anything else we could do."

The Film and Television Unit has an annual budget of just $1.5 million, which used to be raised through grants and donations. Since 1991, all the funding has come from the Screen Actors Guild, which counts directors and producers among its members. This means that the reps are subsidized by the very people they are monitoring and sometimes forcing to spend money they probably don't want to spend. Proper care for worms on a set, as dictated by American Humane guidelines, can be thousands of dollars a day, while using them in a shot and then tossing them out costs nothing. Several reps told me of incidents in which a producer growled at them about the money that their safeguards were costing. Rosa waves off the question of conflict. "The industry should support us," she said. "They have lots of money and we don't. We shouldn't have to compete for grant money that should be going to neutering programs and shelters." The budget is skin-tight, and the number of productions that the Film and Television Unit oversees has grown every year, particularly since the expansion of cable, satellite television, and independent films.

In the past, local humane associations subcontracted with American Humane to cover movies shot outside the country. One of these, a family film called "Running Free," was shot in 1999 in South Africa under the supervision of the Animal Anti-Cruelty League of Johannesburg. The group vouched for the animals' treatment, but it also reported that four horses had died during the film's production and that shock collars were used to control others. American Humane gave the movie a "Believed Acceptable" rating—one notch below the usual "Acceptable," but the review on its Web site makes no mention of the deaths or the shock collars.

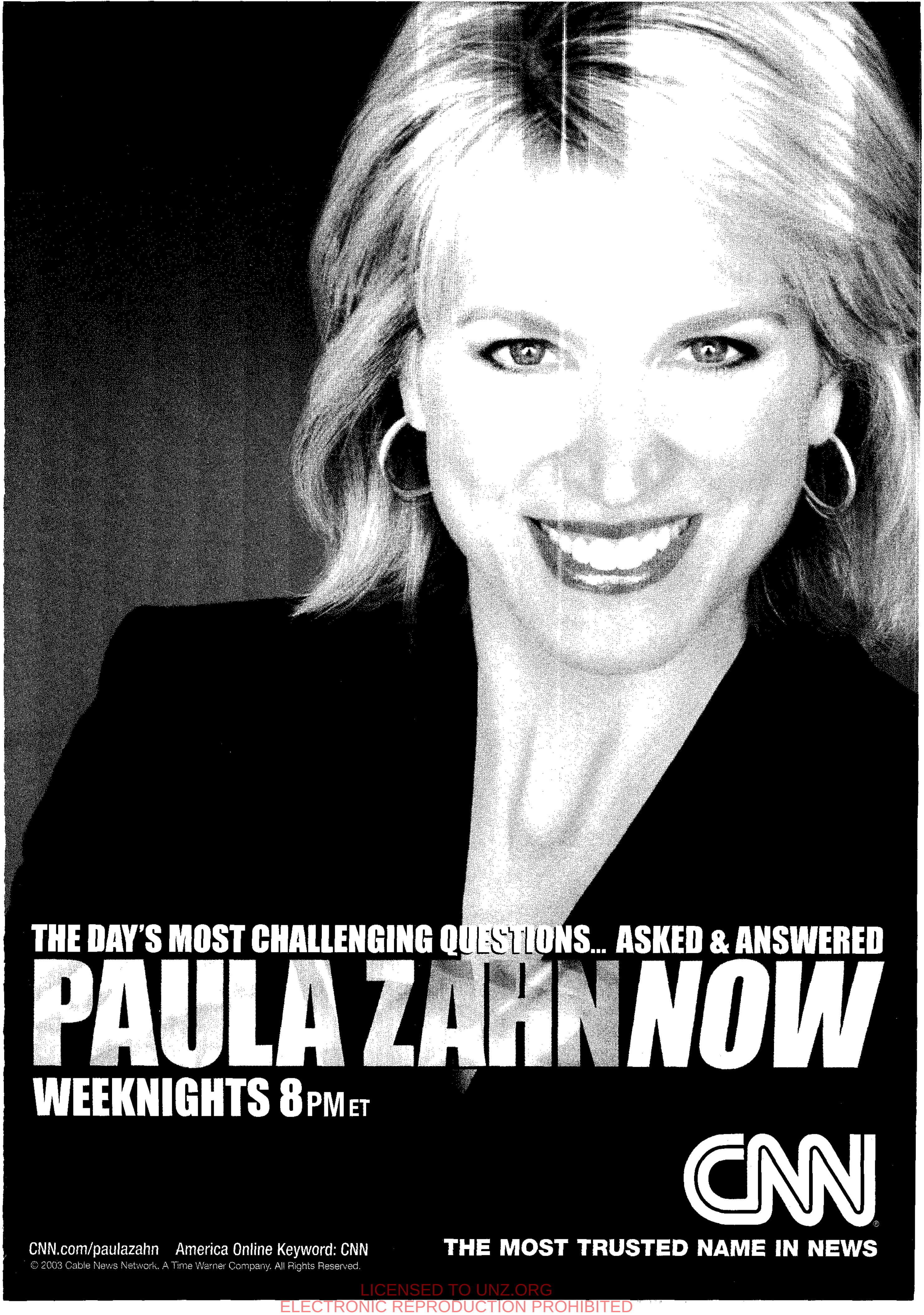
Partly as a result of "Running Free," the Film and Television Unit now uses only field reps it has trained. It sends reps around the world to cover locations and has employees on call in Australia and England. Rosa hopes eventually to add reps in Africa and Europe. "We have to keep up," she said. "This is very high-profile. It sets a standard. And we have to keep current on new information. Right now, I'm looking into the new science that's coming out on whether fish feel pain in their lips. It's always been assumed that they don't, so we've permitted the use of barbless hooks in fishing scenes. If it turns out that they do actually feel pain, we'll have a lot of people in the industry pissed off when we tell them they no longer can put a real fish on a hook."

Overseeing a film like "Soccer Dog: European Cup" is a pretty soft assignment for a Film and Television Unit rep. The movie involved no snakes being milked (not allowed by American Humane guidelines); no chickens stacked in containers that permitted the birds to defecate on one another (not allowed); no six-horse hitches in front of cannon fire; no arachnids having their physical characteristics permanently altered; and no apes being asked to perform near an animatronic object or a costumed person such as a clown to which the apes had not been first allowed to become accustomed (all forbidden). Unlike movies such as "Far and Away," which had a thousand horses in a single shot that took three weeks to set up, or "The Horse Whisperer," which had such difficult horse scenes that the Film and Television Unit field rep spent a year consulting with the producer before shooting even started, "Soccer Dog: European Cup," the sequel to "Soccer Dog," is a low-key family film with what the reps call "moderate action," requiring nothing more demanding than having the leading dog bounce a ball on its nose. The precautions necessary for the dogs would be considerably less expensive and complicated than those for, say, flies or maggots, which have to be accounted for after each shot.

The person assigned to the movie was Netta Bank, a graduate of the Moorpark program, who has been with American Humane for twelve years. Bank is small and trim and has dark pixie-cut hair. She lives in Simi Valley with a parrot and five dogs, four of whom are decommissioned actors (one had a role in "As Good as It Gets"), but in fact Bank is more of a monkey person. Her major at Moorpark was sheep, parrots, baboons, and pigtail macaques. She once was a contestant on "To Tell the Truth," impersonating her hero, the orangutan specialist Birute Galdikas. "If there's a chimp job, they think of me first," Bank likes to say. She has worked on dozens of movies, some chimp and some not, and carries around an alphabetical list of them which starts with "Anger Management" and ends with "What Lies Beneath," "Wild Bill," and "Wolf."

This particular day was the fourth of the "Soccer Dog" shoot, and we were on an elementary-school playing field in the Los Angeles suburb of Rancho Palos Verdes, which for the purposes of the movie was standing in for a small town in Scotland. After driving to the set, Bank put her folding director's chair, her shade umbrella, and her snacks in a grassy area near the animal trainer's truck, and then she started filling out American Humane paperwork, which requires a scene-by-scene accounting of what the animals did, how they were induced to do it, and what safety precautions were in place. Another field rep, Ed Lish, had dropped by to watch some of the filming; he was on his way home from checking on Johnny, a horse starring in "Deadwood." Lish is an American Humane officer as well as a Film and Television Unit rep, so he was dressed in a khaki uniform and was carrying a badge. Lish grew up on a ranch in Idaho and likes working with horses. "I hate doing the chimp jobs," Lish said. "They scream too damn much. Dogs are fine, too, although the worst job I ever did was that musher movie 'Iron Will.' Have you ever been around sled dogs? Those dogs are the goddam fightingest dogs I've ever seen."

The stars of "Soccer Dog," however, were a couple of pacifists. The lead was played by a mongrel with searching green eyes named Chip; a nervous cairn terrier named Ernie played the bad guy. Roger Schumacher, their owner and trainer, had worked with American



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Humane on a batch of other movies, including "The Grinch," "Annie," "The Hulk," "Benji," "S.W.A.T," and "Kill Bill." Schumacher has been part of the Hollywood animal world his entire life: his father was an animal trainer, and he started working professionally with dogs in 1972. Like most of the people who procure animals for movies and television, Schumacher owns almost all the animals he uses. He has a kennel of twenty-five dogs; most of them, including Chip, are rescues from the shelters. Schumacher worked on the first "Soccer Dog" movie and had helped the producer select Chip for the sequel.

Usually, producers hire a trainer first and the animal second, which is the equivalent of hiring an agent and acting coach first and the actor second. When it comes to casting, producers sometimes let the trainer choose the animal; other times, they have a request so precise and improbable that it sounds like a punch line. One trainer told me recently that he had been asked to find a longhaired dachshund that knew how to run on a treadmill. "It was so frustrating," the trainer said. "I already had a Jack Russell who knew how to do it! But the producer was stuck on the idea of a longhaired dachshund. What could I do?" If the trainer doesn't already own the kind of animal the producer wants, he or she will sometimes swap with another trainer. Earlier in the week, I had been talking to someone in the Hollywood animal business who was working on a movie that needed pigeons. He specialized in primates, so he borrowed pigeons from a colleague who was big in birds. He said it had worked out nicely, because a few weeks later the bird guy needed to borrow some of his baboons.

When we arrived on the "Soccer Dog" set, Chip was getting ready for a scene that required him to walk up a ramp and open the door of a Port-a-Potty, look to make sure there weren't any bad guys inside, and then step in, letting the door slam behind him. Netta Bank examined the Port-a-Potty and the ramp and determined that they were both safe for Chip. Schumacher ran through the scene with the dog and then told the director that they were ready to go. On the first take, Chip went up the ramp too quickly—a tendency that Schumacher had told me was Chip's greatest limitation as an actor. The second take didn't work, because the door caught a breeze and swung open rather than shutting behind him. Then the director realized that the camera was catching Chip at an unflattering angle. "We're going to have to reset a little," he said to the cinematographer, pointing to Chip's tail. "Can we avoid making this too much of an anus shot, please?" On the third take, Chip nudged the door open, paused as if he were really considering whether to go in or not, and then stepped inside. The door flapped shut behind him. "Perfect," the director called out. "Nice work, Chip."

While the next shot was being set up, Schumacher came over to talk to Netta Bank. He was leading a fat yellow Labrador retriever that he was training for the upcoming James Brooks movie "Spanglish." Unlike Chip, who was the backup in "The Grinch" and "Annie," or Ernie, who had a long-running role on "George Lopez," the Labrador retriever was not a professional actor. He was on loan from a private owner, an arrangement that animal trainers do not favor, but he was the only dog Schumacher could find with the right kind of sweet, goofy face that Brooks was looking for.

"Be sure to write down that I beat my dogs, Netta," Schumacher said.

"You know I will," Bank answered. "I'm writing an incident report on you, Roger."

The fat Lab burped. "Let's go," Schumacher said to the dog. He said he needed to teach the dog to walk backward, so he wanted to start working on it while the crew was moving equipment for the next shot. Ernie was resting in a crate in Schumacher's truck, and Chip was playing nearby with Schumacher's daughter. He is actually a white dog with tan patches, but for the movie he had been dyed blond. He is a small, fluffy animal with a Teddy-bear face, long legs, and ears that fold over at the tips, like little paper airplanes. Suddenly, one of the extras ran over and put her arms around him. Bank jumped to her feet.

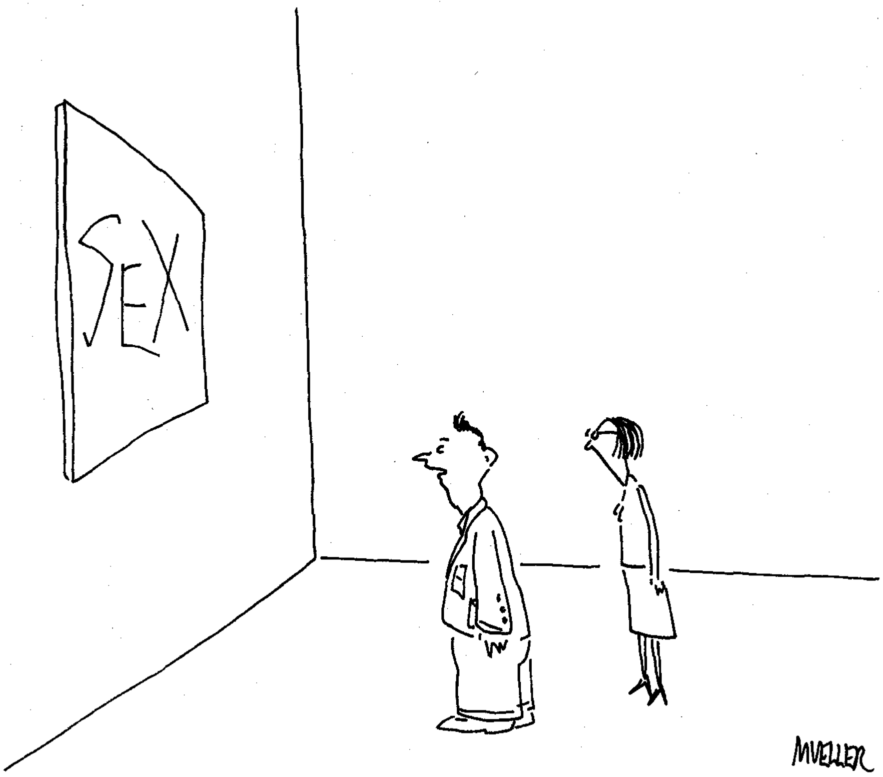
"Don't handle the dog," she said in a loud voice.

"But I'm a professional masseuse," the woman said. "I just wanted to give him a massage."

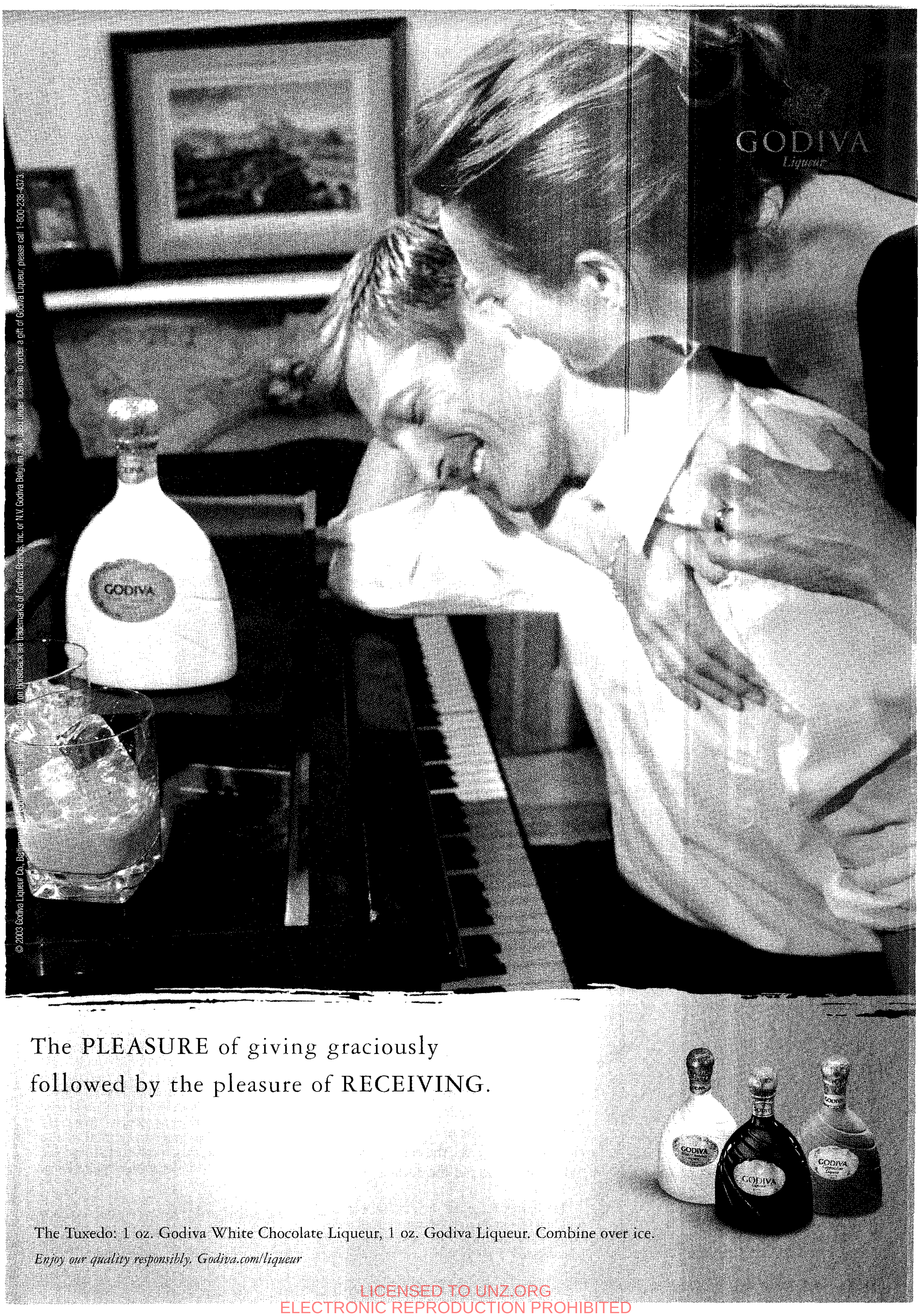
"Do not handle the dog," Bank repeated. "He's working."

"I think he knows I'm a masseuse," the woman said, looking crestfallen.

"Maybe so," Bank said. "But he's working." ♦



"We could put it in the bedroom."



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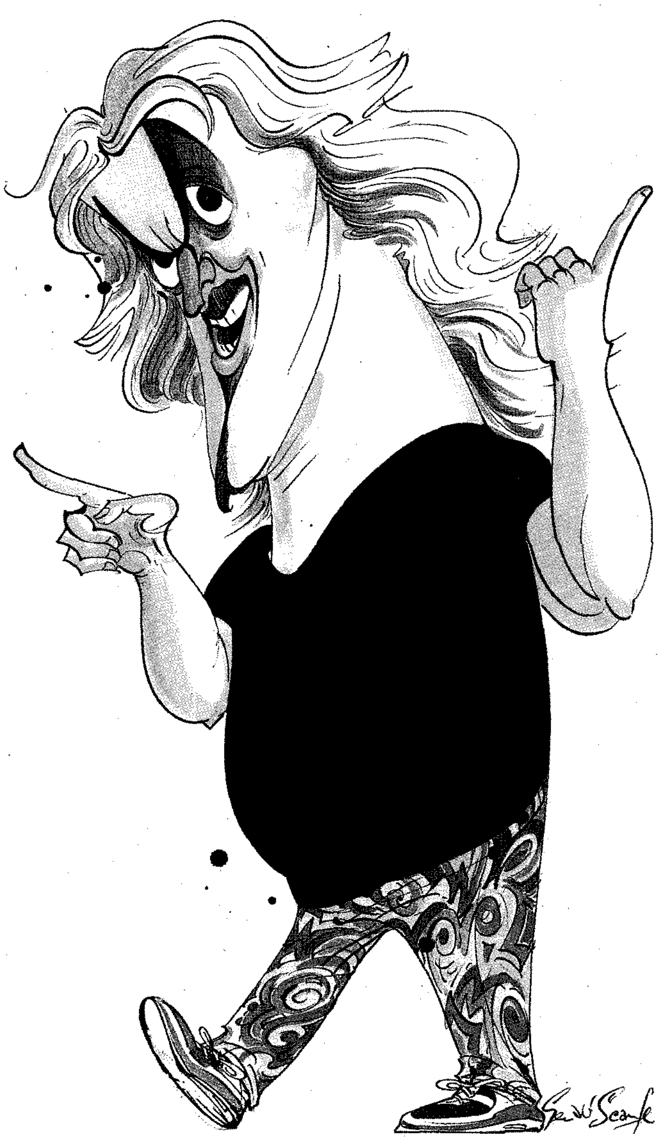
CHASING THE WITCH

A lot of things weren't funny till Billy Connolly took them onstage.

BY JOHN LAHR



Scot of the anarchic: Connolly brought the rhythms of the street to British standup.

GERALD SCARFE

The Scottish comedian Billy Connolly likes to date his enduring optimism to his days in the shipyards of Glasgow, where he worked as a welder from the ages of sixteen to twenty-four. One day, he says, he went to buy a pack of cigarettes from Tam, the chain-smoking old worker who ran the company store:

> He started to cough. It was like a storm building up—a thundering storm from miles away. He ended up with these noises that sounded like a platoon of cavalry galloping through a swamp in Wellingtons full of vomit. Then it came to an end; all calmed down. I says, "Jesus, Tam, that's some cough." He says, "Fuck off!" He says, "Did you pass the graveyard on the way in here?" I says, "Aye." He says, "Well, the graveyard's full of people that would fucking love my cough." And that's basically my philosophy: if you think you're having a bad time, the graveyard's full of people who would love to be doing what you're doing.

In a thirty-three-year career, which has included some two thousand stage appearances, eighteen videos, and fifteen

CDs, Connolly has almost never written down a line of material. Instead, onstage, for two and a half hours, he holds a sort of séance with himself. (One of his daughters once referred to his profession as "comedium.") A comedian performing without a script is like a high-wire artist working without a net: it creates a particular kind of immediacy. Connolly's free-associating hodgepodge of personal revelation, fantasy, and bawdry often takes him, as well as the audience, by surprise. "All this shit comes out," he told me in his distinctive burr. "All this fear and angst and learning." He added, "If I'm talking about something during the day, it'll pop up in the night. I remember talking about sex to Pamela"—his wife, the former comedian Pamela Stephenson—"when we first met. My point was that it was an animal act, and the worst thing you could do to it was put on it the manners of the dining room." In his routine, that idea became "You mustn't take the animalism of the bedroom into the dining room—except for foreplay. . . . It's handy to remember, when it comes to the cutlery, that it's the same as foreplay: start at the outside and work your way in."

The cross-dressing British comedian Eddie Izzard, whose own humor was inspired by Connolly's early, pathfinding performances, explains, "He'd just sort of say whatever he wanted to say; it didn't seem to bear any relationship to any structure that had come before." Last January, at a tribute to Connolly organized by the BBC and the British Academy of Film and Television Arts, Izzard said, "He shall lead you from the world of 'my wife' jokes to the promised land of the comic philosopher." Eric Idle, part of the "Monty Python" menagerie and Connolly's neighbor, agrees. Connolly offers the thrill of "ruthless honesty," he says. "He's not censoring anything. You see the whole Billy." (As did more than twelve million British television viewers two years ago, when Connolly, in order to raise money for charity, streaked naked around the statue of Eros in Piccadilly Circus.)

Connolly is an instinctive disturber of the peace, an enemy of blandness—of "the beigists," as he calls the humorless bourgeoisie. But although he makes a few million dollars annually from his comedy—he spends up to half of every year on tour—the American public is still, for the most part, unaware of him and his role as the progenitor of alternative British comedy. A beloved Scots Everyman, Connolly has never quite managed to sell himself as an American Everyman. Pamela Stephenson's insightful book about Connolly's life, "Billy," was a No. 1 best-seller on both hardback and paperback lists in Britain for twenty-four weeks, selling two million copies and earning Stephenson the 2002 British Book Awards' Book of the Year prize. (Her second Connolly volume, "Bravemouth," was published in England last month and is already No. 2 on the *Sunday Times* best-seller list.) In the United States, however, "Billy" was acquired by Overlook Press for a four-figure advance and only sixteen thousand copies were printed. Although Connolly has lent his charm to two American sitcoms—"Head of the Class" and "Billy"—and was featured in a 1990 HBO special, "Whoopi Goldberg Presents Billy Connolly," he is still perhaps best recognized in America as the swaggering manservant John Brown, whose plain speaking won the heart of Judi Dench's Queen Victoria in the 1997 film "Mrs. Brown" (a performance whose subtlety surprised fans of Connolly's brazen comedy).

Connolly's lack of renown in this country is, in fact, one of the reasons that he has chosen to live here—in California—since 1991. "To let go of some of that fame I have in Europe is a wonderful thing," he says. "At first, you think it's like a big spear, but actually it's a big shield." One of Connolly's maxims is "Don't work *out*, work *in*." He knows that the hardest battle a star wages is an internal one: the world wants the extraordinary, but the performer—who is, by definition, a salesman of himself—risks losing himself in the management of the ordinary. Still, Connolly, who occasionally catches himself trying to call room service from his home phone, has more or less come to terms with normality. He lives among the good and the great of Hollywood (his house in Laurel Canyon, which overlooks Universal Studios, is just a few doors down from David Hockney's), but in his daily life he experiences a more mundane version of Los Angeles. He picks his children up from school; he eats with his family; he lets other people speak at dinner parties. It's his detachment from the Hollywood scene that allows him to do the work of comedy, he

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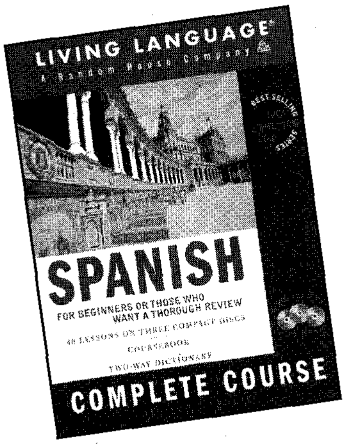

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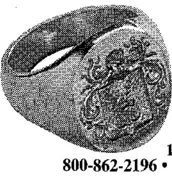

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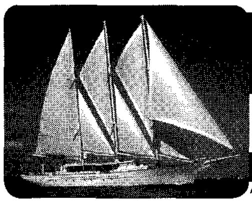

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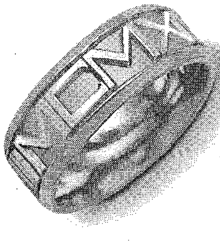

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says: "Life without that adoration is so nice. The volume goes down. You don't move so fast. You can go for walks. You can look in shopwindows. You can feed your brain." He adds, "You have to look at the world. Absorb it, read, look, stay awake. It isn't what you're hearing that's important; it's what comes out again."

One of Connolly's havens is a cigar store in the Valley called the Big Easy. Here, in a crepuscular boys'-club atmosphere of beer signs, red leather chairs, old baseball mitts, boxing gloves, and pinball machines, Connolly can carouse and enjoy the invigorating company of "honest guys," who remind him of the men he knew in Glasgow (which he calls "Liverpool without deodorant"). "They know about football and baseball and politics," he says. "They're very, very aware. They're men. They're not new men." Connolly refers to himself as an "end-of-the-pier comedian," who aspires to be "beer-down-your-nose funny," and his noisy bravado is essentially a Friday-night pub style—"ludicrous storytelling, lying, and bragging that gets up to such a pitch." For the half hour that it took him to smoke his Bahia Gold one afternoon at the Big Easy, Connolly, who will be sixty-one this month but has the lanky body and the attitude of a much younger man, paced beside the counter in his usual mufti of cowboy boots and jeans and bantered with his mates: Mikey, who makes solder; Stevie G., an actor; and Billy, a union man. They argued about George Bush, Rush Limbaugh, the Kennedy assassination, Tom Petty's voice, the moon landing, and formerly American-backed operatives—Osama bin Laden, Manuel Noriega, Saddam Hussein—who turned against the United States. ("There's one thing about young assholes," Connolly said. "They tend to become old assholes. There's no blinding flash on the road to fucking Damascus here!") The discussion ended on the topic of corporate crime, and, playing a vigorous air guitar, Connolly broke into song:

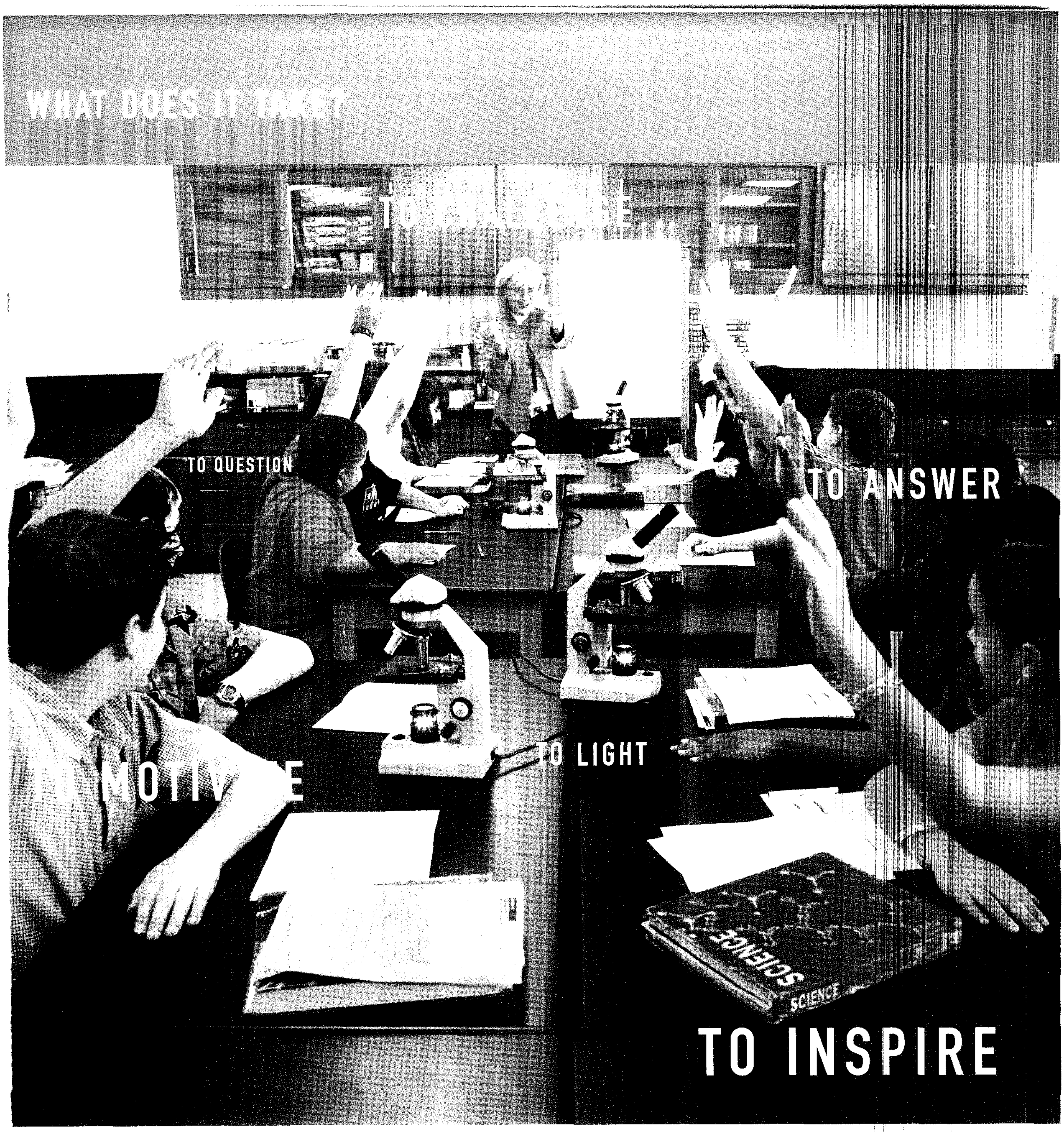
> So you lost your money
> And your pension's fucked,
> Enron-Ron-Ron-Ron
> Enron-Ron-Ron!

It struck me that the warmhearted palaver I was overhearing was a version of Connolly's standup performance—a chat to friends in a room, except that, in the latter case, the room holds more than a thousand people.

At one point, Billy the union guy brought up the book "Billy," and Connolly joked about his wife's literary success. "She's got rich," he said. "When it's *about* you, you don't get anything. Who's on the cover? Who gets the money? Wrong again, Bill. She got this weird gold thing"—the British Book Award. "I get the Center of the Doughnut Award. Zip." On the way to the cigar store, Connolly had spoken more seriously about the memoir. "All it did was lighten my load," he said. "I didn't want to be seen as a victim. I'm not a victim. I'm a survivor." Stephenson, who was born in New Zealand and who was a piquant comedian in her youth, is now a clinical psychologist (her dissertation analyzed the experience of fame), and in the annals of emotional impoverishment her telling of Connolly's story ranks alongside the biographies of Charlie Chaplin, who was embraced by his father for the first time at the age of eleven, and of Buster Keaton, whose father literally wiped the floor with him—he was billed as "the Human Mop" in a family vaudeville act that turned child abuse into an art form.

One evening in 1945, when Connolly was three and his sister Florence was four, their twenty-one-year-old mother, Mamie, walked out of their two-room flat on Dover Street in Glasgow. Her husband, William, had been with the Royal Air Force in Burma for three years and wouldn't return from the war for another year. It wasn't unusual for Mamie to go out in the evening—she enjoyed a good time—and she frequently left the children alone. On one occasion, according to Stephenson's book, Florence fell into the embers of the fireplace and subsequently lost the sight in one eye, an incidence of neglect that brought the family to the attention of the Royal Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. This time, however, Mamie had no one to answer to for her absence; she was gone for good. Connolly and his sister were eventually found by neighbors, crying, unkempt, and hungry.

The children went to live with their father's sisters Margaret and Mona, Connolly recalled in "The Big Yin," a 1994 biography by Jonathan Margolis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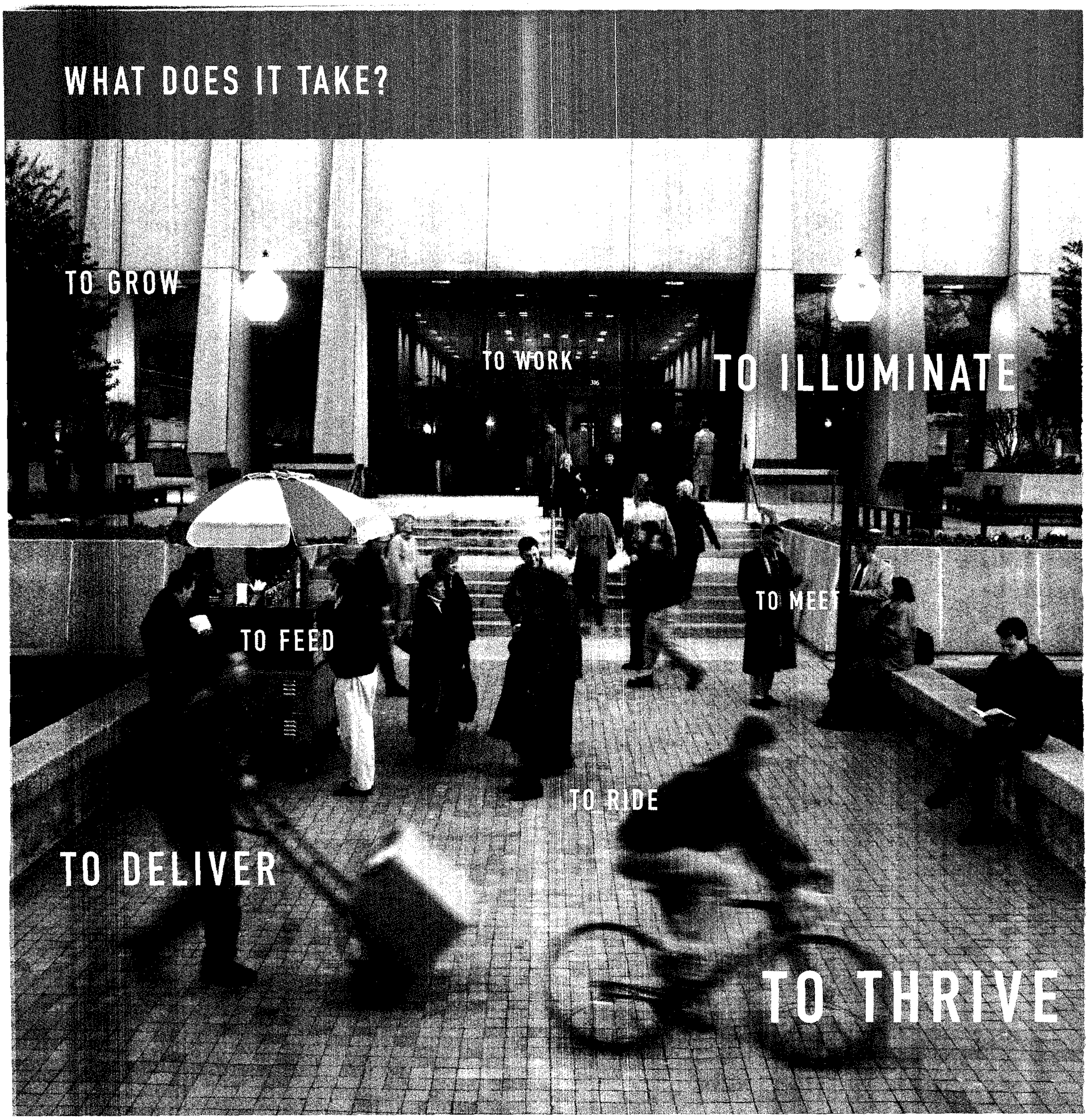
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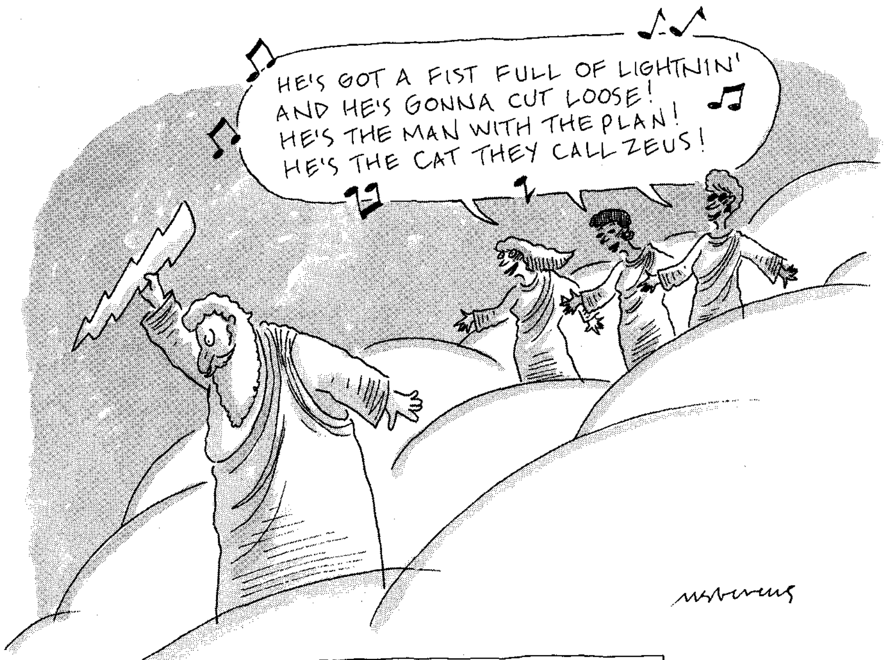
HE'S GOT A FIST FULL OF LIGHTNIN'
AND HE'S GONNA CUT LOOSE!
HE'S THE MAN WITH THE PLAN!
HE'S THE CAT THEY CALL ZEUS!

THE ZEUSETTES

• •

(Big Yin, "Big One" in Scottish slang, is Connolly's nickname). "They were both single and in their twenties. One was just out of the Wrens"—the women's corps of the Royal Navy—"in Portsmouth, and the other one was a career nurse. I think they deeply regretted it. Especially the older one, Mona, who took the real mother place in my life. It kind of cost her marriage and happiness and stuff, and she took it out on me." When Mamie relented and turned up to visit the children sometime later, Mona blocked the door. There was a fracas. Mamie floored Mona with a punch and stalked off. "She had lots of fire and character," Connolly says of his mother. "She was a fast runner. If she had been an upper-class person, she would probably have achieved some kind of notoriety." Mamie settled thirty miles away, in Dunoon, where she remarried, raised a second family of four, and worked in a hospital canteen. But Connolly had no contact with her. In his teen-age years, he says, "I would cycle down to her town. I didn't know what she fucking looked like, but I thought maybe she would know what I looked like. So I would saunter about and have cups of tea and hope she would say, 'Excuse me, are you Billy Connolly?' "

Connolly was twenty-five and achieving his first success—as half of a folk-singing duo called the Humblebums—when he finally heard his mother say those words. He had come offstage at the Glenmorag Hotel in Dunoon. "She said, 'I'm your mother,' " he recalls. "I remember just staring at her. I thought, Oh, my God, you are, too. There's a line in a Peter McDougall play: 'You never forget your mother's smell.' I gave her a wee cuddle. I kissed her neck, and—*ding!*—it just came roaring back to me. I said, 'Let's go in the lounge bar here.' She said, 'I hope you don't drink too much.' I thought, What? You're fucking worried about me? A birthday card would have been nice."

In 1990, Connolly was betrayed by Mamie a second time, in an envious attack printed in a Scottish tabloid. "I'm quite happy sitting here in my wee house the ragman would not give me a balloon for," she told the newspaper, adding, "I don't watch his TV shows and have never seen any of his films. If he was your son, would you? I just feel his material could be embarrassing." Connolly responded, two years later, from the stage. "The *Sunday Mail* did a story on her. On Mother's Day . . . (Nice fuckin' touch, lads!) She said I'd abandoned her. Fuckin' who abandoned who around here?! I remember the day she left! 'Fuck

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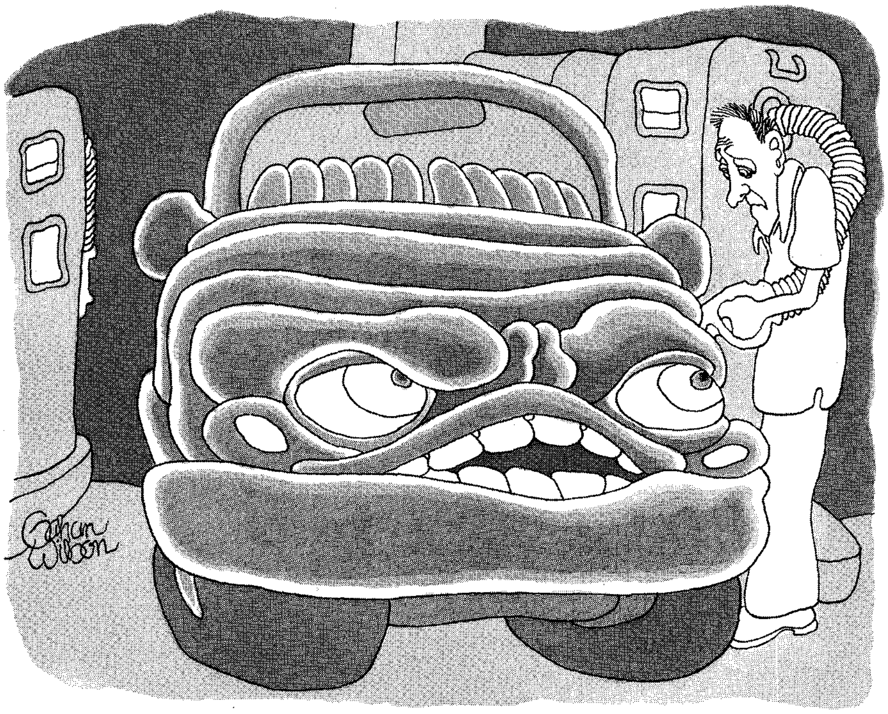
off out of here,' I said. 'Don't show your face around here. I'll be fine. I'm gonna be a welder.' " When Mamie was dying, in 1993, at the age of sixty-nine, Connolly drove to Dunoon to see her. "I got there, and I just couldn't do it," he says. "I drove back to Glasgow again. I wanted to love her, and I wanted to love my father. I wanted him to love me back. I wanted the thing that everybody else gets. As far as I can see, everybody gets it free."

Connolly's first memory of any kind of physical affection is of a kiss from a school friend, at the age of seven or eight. ("Gracie McClintock! I can remember it today like it was yesterday. I never got over it.") His birthday was never celebrated; the first time he saw a birthday cake was on a trip to the circus when he was eight. Laughter was rare at home; family meals were a source of friction, not connection. "It was no joy when we all sat down," Connolly says of dinner with his aunts. "It was a time to be picked on. As far as they were concerned, I was a failure, an embarrassment, a loser." His gruff, taciturn father, who, after the war, had moved in with his sisters and got a job in a machine-parts factory, was mostly an absent parent, with the disconcerting habit of misplacing his son on outings—he lost Connolly at the Glasgow zoo and on a hike over the Barrowlands. According to "Billy," William Connolly only once managed to acknowledge his son's accomplishments, and he offered no explanation for Mamie's behavior or for his own. "It was very frustrating," Connolly says. "Sometimes when he was drunk, I would try and get him talking. He would cry sometimes, but you'd never get anything decent going." In 1988, as his father was dying in a hospital, Connolly confessed to Stephenson that, from the age of ten until he was fifteen or so, he had shared a bed with his father, who molested him. "The most awful thing was that it was kind of pleasant, physically, you know," Connolly told Stephenson in "Billy." "That's why nobody tells. I remember it happening a lot, not every night, but every night you were in a state thinking it was going to happen, that you'd be awakened by it. I would pray for the holidays. I couldn't wait for us to go to the seaside, because then we had separate beds."

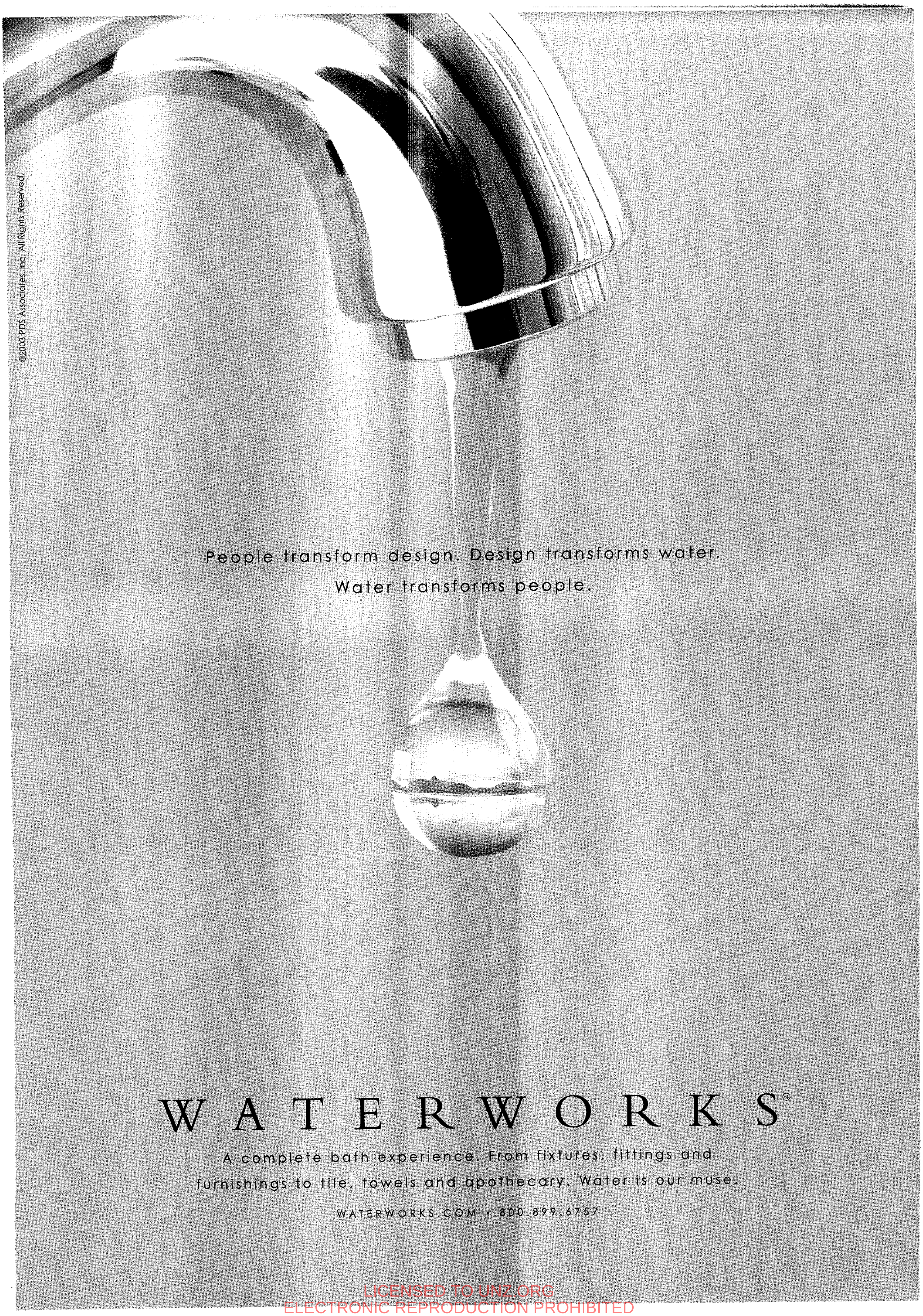
"They just kept making us live in their dark side," Connolly says of his parents now. "I had no example of light." Florence, to whom he was very close, was his only solace. He was "always in trouble—all scars, stitches, broken bits from falling off things and getting punched in the mouth." Mona, who was later institutionalized, beat him almost every day throughout his childhood, hitting him with her fists, her feet, wet towels, and high-heeled shoes, and rubbing his face in his dirty underwear. Years later, in his routines, Connolly parsed his family's violence, using laughter as a form of shadowboxing. He ridiculed his "fuckin' mad auntie" 's approach to child rearing: "She found a shop in Glasgow: Clothes for the Child You Didn't Want in the Fuckin' First Place!, Clothes Guaranteed Never to Be in Fashion." Describing taking a sucker punch to the chest from his father, which sent him flying over the sofa, he joked, "I'd never seen a couch from that angle before." "Have you had enough?" he remembered being asked by his guardians. "What a stupid question! . . . I think you're supposed to say, 'Would a kick in the testicles be out of the question?' " From the gravity of his grief, he created an atmosphere of lightness:

> Men will tell you a couple of times not to do a thing, then they'll lose patience and go for you. It's like being hit by a building. It's like having a Volkswagen dropped on you. Your father would do that. He'd kick, punch, bite, elbow, and gouge your eye all at once. You knew it was coming when sentences and words would start to fragment. "Get down off that wall. I won't tell you again. What did I tell you? Get that—! For Chri—! For fuck sa—! Jesus! Ya fu—! Oh! Come here!" It was like being run over by a herd of cattle. Women—they hit you in the rhythm of the argument. "Don't-you-ever-let-me-see-you-do-that-again!" Usually there's two real haymakers to start—"DON'T!—YOU!—Ever-let-me-see-you-do-that-again!!!"



"More!"

School, for Connolly, was as brutalizing as the bedlam of home. Like many children who have endured early abuse, he had difficulty absorbing information. His mind, he says, "was jumping all over the place," and things came out "higgledy-piggledy." "I was bright enough," he adds. "I liked French, mathematics, equations. But I couldn't remember it on examination day. I'm not very academically bright. I don't retain very much, and I never have. I've got that attention-deficit-disorder thing. I always thought I was kind of stupid. I was told that all the time at school." For many years, Connolly refused to do homework. "I used to get belted for it every day," he says. "I thought, Fuck you. Fuck homework. If your teachers are nightmares and it's a nightmare when you go home, everybody who represents authority seems to be a bit of an asshole. So fuck 'em all. It's the only way to survive." Connolly was an avid reader, but when he left school, at fifteen, his only



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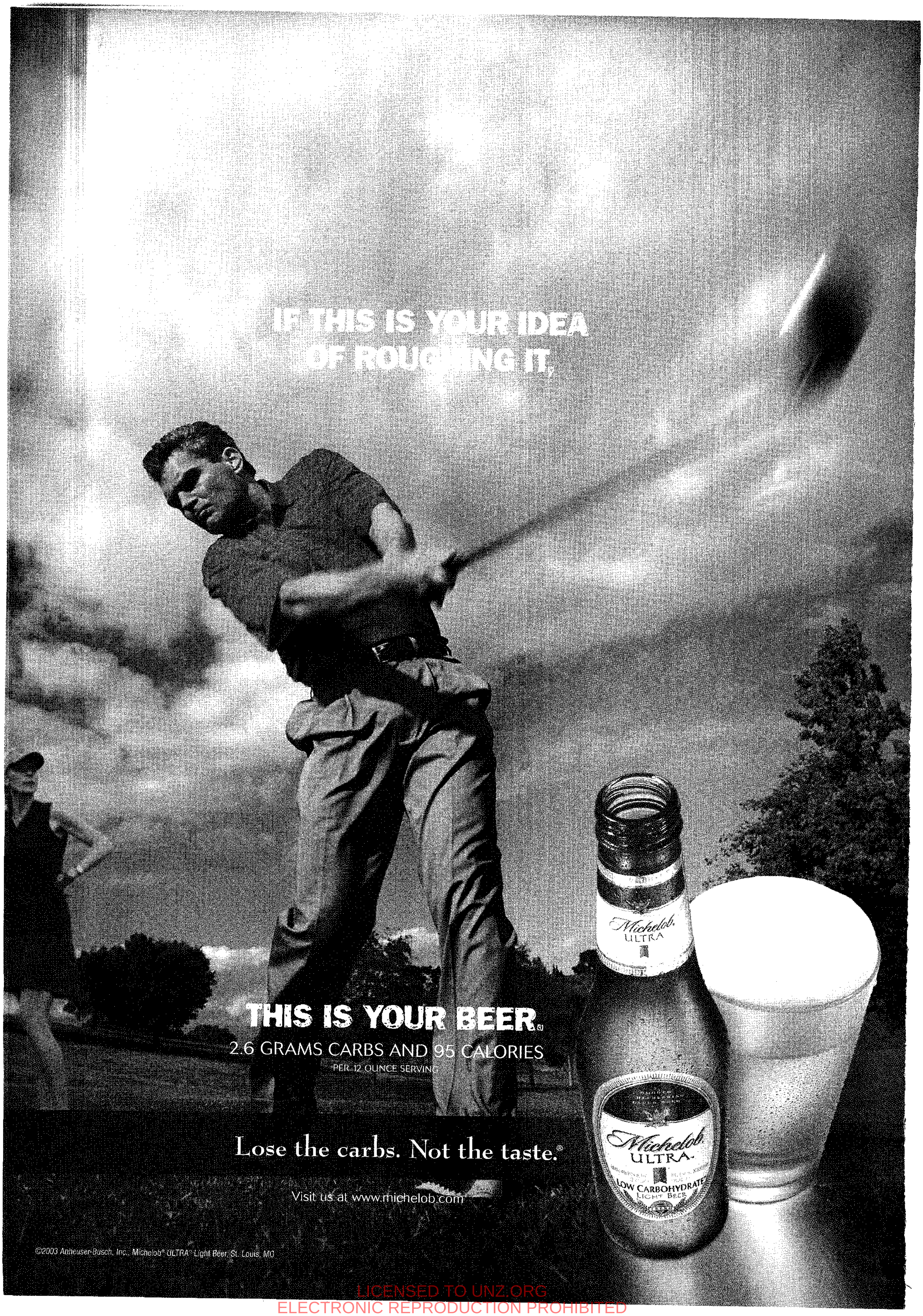
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STAG'S LEAP

Then the creature on the label of our favorite red
looks like my husband, casting himself off a
cliff in his fervor to get free of me.
His fur is rough and cozy, his face
placid, tranced, ruminant,
the bough of each furculum reaches back
to his haunches, each tine on it grows straight up
and branches, a model of his brain, archaic,
unwieldy. He bears its bony tray
level as he soars from the precipice edge,
dreamy. When anyone escapes, my heart
leaps up. Even when it's I who am escaped from,
I am half on the side of the leaver. It's so quiet,
and empty, when he's left. I feel like a landscape,
a ground without a figure. *Sauve*
qui peut. Once I saw a drypoint of someone
tiny being crucified
on a fallow deer's antlers. I feel like his victim,
and he seems my victim, I worry that the outstretched
legs on the hart are bent the wrong way as he
throws himself off. Oh my love. I was vain of his
faithfulness, as if it was
a compliment, rather than a state
of partial sleep. And when I wrote about him, did he
feel he had to walk around
carrying my books on his head like a stack of
posture volumes, or the rack of horns
hung where a hunter washes the venison
down with the sauvignon? Oh leap,
leap! Careful of the rocks! Does true
love have to wish him happiness
in his new life, even sexual
joy? I think so. Below his shaggy
belly, in the distance, lie the even dots
of a vineyard, its vines not blasted, its roots
clean, its bottles growing at the ends of their
blowpipes as dark, green, wavering groans.

—*Sharon Olds*

qualification was a letter from the headmaster saying that he was "always punctual." Nowadays, "just to make an atmosphere" in the middle of a riff—where Connolly's habit of "thinking sideways" has become a glorious asset—he will sometimes scream out his teachers' humiliating rebukes:

> CONNOLLY, YOU'RE HOLDING THE WHOLE CLASS BACK! AND YOU BROKE YOUR MOTHER'S HEART, STUPID BOY! Now, Connolly, go out and count the school railings. Go on. Waste of fuckin' space. I don't know why we let him wear the school blazer at all. Disgrace to the tie. You'll come to nothing, Connolly. You're a jellyfish, a spineless jellyfish. You've held the whole class back for three and a half years. And you're spineless and You'll Come to Nothing.
>
> Well . . . I'm fuckin' rich! Fuck all of you—I hope you're happy in your semi-detached shite houses. I'm *your* fuckin' worst nightmare.

For years, Connolly saw himself as small (though he is now six feet one, until he turned eighteen he was only five feet six), unattractive, unsuccessful, uneducated, and unwanted. In Glasgow, he started his own gang, the Connollys, and he spent a lot of time performing dangerous stunts and fighting in the streets, an activity he "quite looked forward to—long division scared me more." He also became obsessed with funerals. When he was fourteen or fifteen, he decided to cut school and go for a long walk, perhaps to London, which was four hundred miles away. He'd walked about ten miles when he met up with a funeral procession. "I followed it into like a crematorium place and just hung around," he says. By the end of the service, he says, he was "filled with joy," and he turned around and headed home. Death seemed a perfect fit with the climate of Connolly's childhood, its aura of absence. "I was incomplete," he says. "It was like being a limb short, like going through life perpetually thinking you'd forgotten something. There was something completely missing, like having nine fingers. Until I started being funny."

At the age of seven, Connolly was pushed into a puddle in his school playground. Instead of crying or pushing back, "I went right into the middle of it and sat down in my shorts as if it was very comfortable," he recalls. "The boys exploded with laughter. I remember the moment as clear as if it was yesterday afternoon. My other limb grew back." He adds, "The atmosphere changed radically. They admired what I'd just done. You could feel it in the air. I thought, Oh, that's the key. This is my role. Instead of being somebody's football all my life, I can actually have a function here. They've given me the O.K." What Stephenson calls Connolly's "fiery, evangelical fuck-youness" started in that playground puddle. "Once you agree to that role, you have to do it every day," he says. In one stunt, Connolly, pretending to be Superman, had wedged himself into the school-bathroom towel dispenser, when a teacher barged in and walloped him. "I didn't give a fuck," he says. "Did you hear the laugh? It was the roar of approval."

Connolly has always believed that comedy is linked to vulnerability. "When your knickers are down, you're funny," he frequently says. "I love life with knickers down." For five decades, he has had a persistent nightmare about drowning, which sometimes makes him cry out in his sleep. "What normally happens," Stephenson writes, "is he discovers he can breathe underwater." In life, laughter

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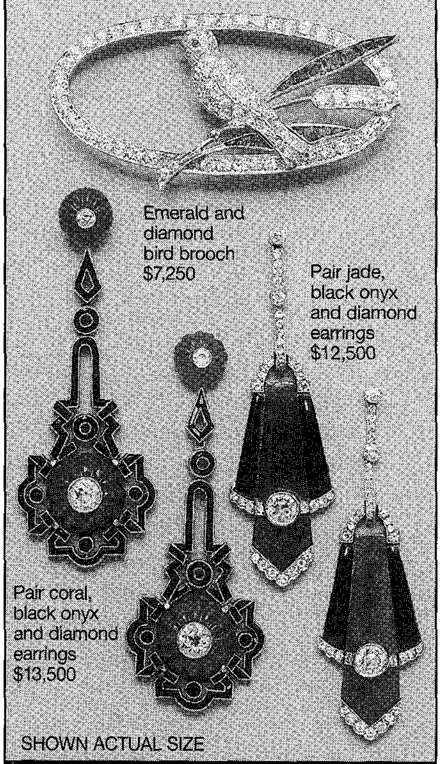
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is what allows Connolly to breathe; it elevates his spirit and eliminates the things that weigh him down. Connolly likes to say that "there is no such thing as bad weather, there's only the wrong clothes"; for him, jokes have always been a sort of raiment that repels emotional storms. As a child, he filled up his bewildered emptiness with comic articulacy, and this made him what he most needed to be: visible. People who, like Connolly, are afraid of the dark (until he was fifty, he often slept with the lights on) are afraid not of not seeing but of not being seen. The worst thing about his parents and his aunts, he says, was that they were oblivious of him: "Nobody was out to torture me. They just kind of forgot." But once he'd learned how to be funny, his daily rants at school always drew a crowd of listeners. After years of being ignored, Connolly, who calls himself a "patter merchant," had found a way to be remembered. "You might say I've talked myself out of a corner," he said.

One day when we were together, this point was brought home by a fax he received from an Australian woman whose son had recently committed suicide. A fan, she was writing to thank Connolly for a fondly remembered phrase from one of his routines—which she and her son had often quoted. In the riff to which the letter referred, Connolly, who likes to collect unintentionally funny signs, such as "Keep Dogs Off Grass" and "This Door Is Alarmed," told of looking in the window of a Glasgow dressmaker's shop and seeing a jacket modishly displayed with a small tag pinned to it that read, "Lovely on." "We would say, 'Lovely on what?' " Connolly says. " 'Lovely on the mantelpiece? Lovely on toast? Lovely on fire?' We'd look at people's clothes and say, 'Lovely on.' " When he read the fax, Connolly said, "I had a little party in my heart." He went on, "When you're doing it right, in your own society, you become the sort of fluff in people's belly buttons. You become something they wear, something they carry around. You would need a forensic scientist to tell you what it was. But it's yours." He explained his particular brand of humor this way: "It's not because you've said something terribly funny; it's because you've reminded them of something very bright in their lives, because you're so passionate about telling them this tiny thing. It's a girl you love, it's fly-tying, it's a banjo—all the things that make you dance."

Learning how to make people laugh and how to play the banjo—"the musical choice of the antisocial," according to Eric Idle—were Connolly's first steps toward self-transformation. By the time he worked up the courage to go into show business, he had already been performing in one way or another in shipyard canteens, on oil rigs, and with the Parachute Regiment of the Territorial Army, in which he enlisted in 1962—and where, in addition to leaping out of planes (he made seventeen jumps in his three-year stint), he was renowned for leaping onto tables to do the "Dance of the Flaming Arseholes," a barroom competition to see who could last the longest with a lighted newspaper in his butt. Amid paratroopers chanting, "Oh the girls in France / Take their knickers down and dance," Connolly was the undefeated champion.

Although he compares his singing voice to "a goose farting in the fog," he lent it, and his banjo skills, to a number of folk groups, including the Skillet Lickers, the Acme Brush Band, and the Humblebums, the last of which had several hits and even made a Royal Command Performance before disbanding, in 1970. He loved the tunes, he says, but not the exaggerated gravity of the singers or their lyrics. Connolly's partner in the Humblebums, the songwriter Gerry Rafferty, was, Connolly says, "a better musician than me, but I was better at stagecraft. I just had to get funny. You can't go on singing about dead sailors forever. You have to own up." Connolly would joke about his métier ("One of those lines you never hear: 'She's shaggin' the banjo player' ") and about the songs he played. "I'm gonna save you a lot of time here," he'd say, by way of introduction. "I've written a song here and it'll do your folk requirements for the evening, and then I can just get on with my banjo-playing: 'The tailor sat cross-legged on the workbench / One eye on his needle, another on the wench. / Oh, little girl, will you marry me? / Oh, no, I love a sailor / And he's far away at sea.' " During his solos, Connolly, who uses the rhythmic Appalachian technique of drop-thumbing to

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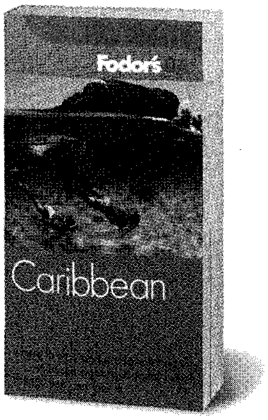

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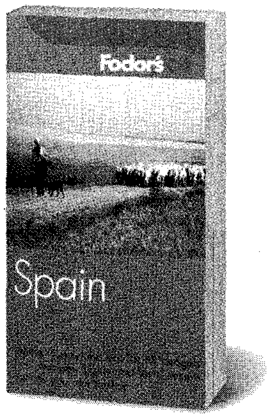

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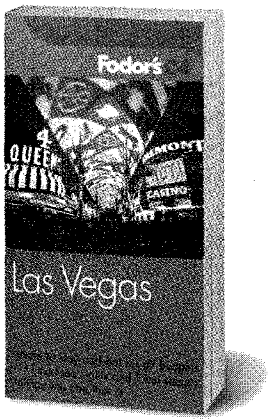

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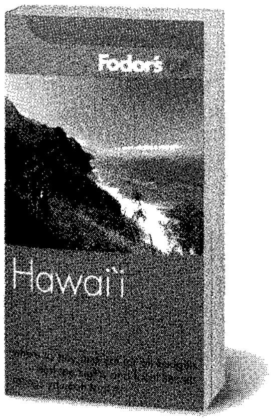

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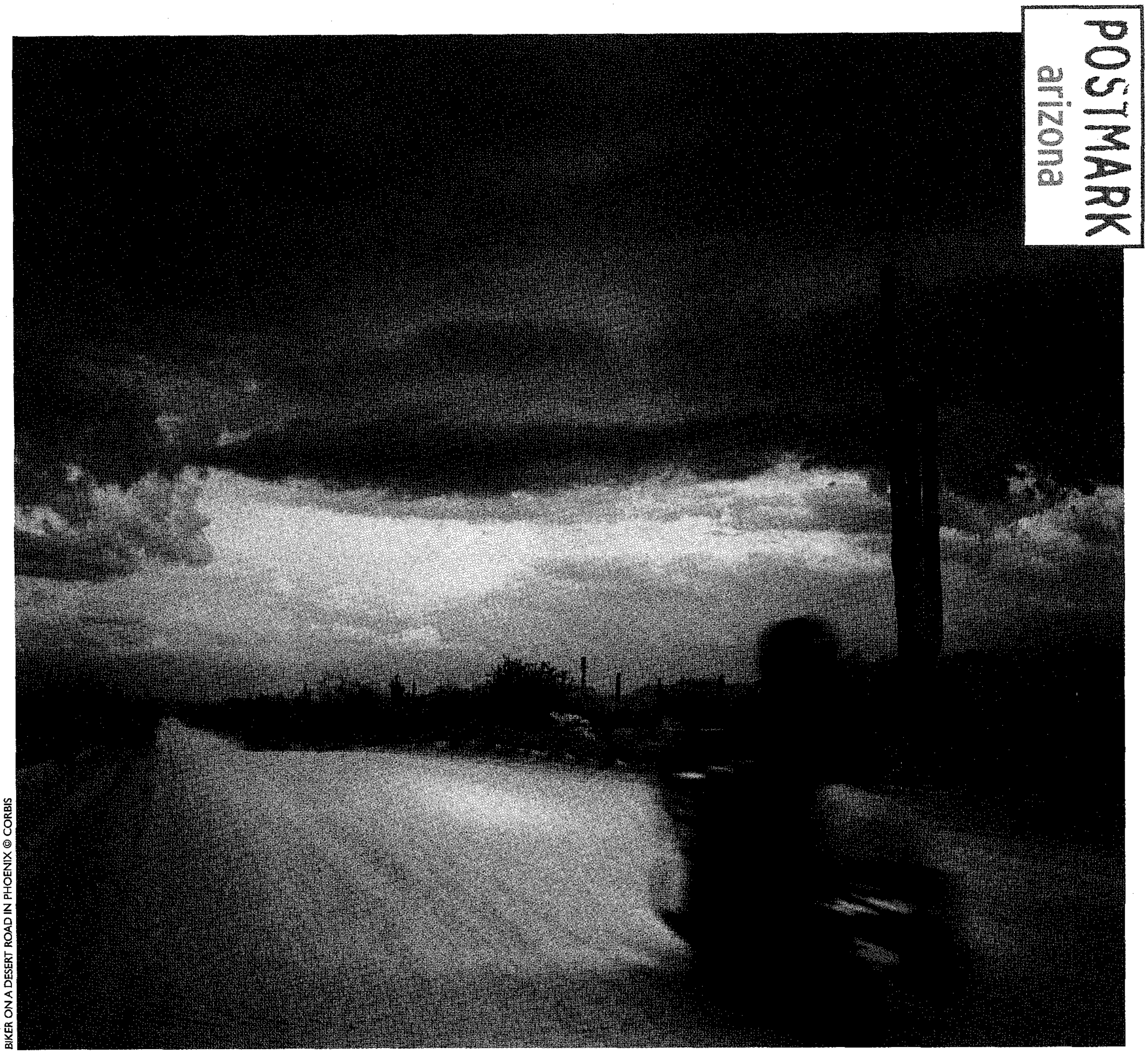

BIKER ON A DESERT ROAD IN PHOENIX © CORBIS

LAND OF RENEWAL

By Chris Howard

For years, my wife was possessed with the idea of living in a ghost town. Her knowledge of which came entirely from the Spaghetti Westerns that she loved. Thus, we rode across the Southwest a number of times in pursuit of the ideal ghost town. Some of the places we visited were horribly sad spots where mining disasters wiped out large portions of the population.

Other towns—and we found examples all over Arizona—were already enjoying a renaissance because itinerant artists had settled there, valuing the dirt-cheap housing and the astonishing light afforded by the vast landscape. Rebirth and renewal are constant themes in Arizona. Maybe that's why the state capital is named for the mythological bird of resurrection.

"Phoenix seems to be the name for me too," wrote Frank Lloyd Wright when he was designing San Marcos in the Desert, a 1,400-acre resort south of Phoenix. Though Wright believed himself "well started now for the last lap of my life and work," the project—engineered by local developer Alexander Chandler—was never completed. Working drawings were finished just in time for the 1929 stock market crash and Wright's temporary camp constructed on the site, Ocatilla, was destroyed in a fire. Despite this setback, in 1937 Wright used the principles he derived from his observations of desert life to build **Taliesin West** (480-860-2700), his own Scottsdale winter home rendered in stone, redwood, and canvas. The other Arizona building associated with Wright is the **Arizona Biltmore** in Phoenix (800-950-0086). World-renowned for its harmonious beauty and superb service, it's the only existing hotel to which Wright, serving as its consulting architect, contributed designs.

Phoenix is the city slicker of Arizona. Three out of five Arizonans live in the metropolitan area and the most sophisticated entertainment venues are here: the **Herberger Theater Center** (602-252-8497), home to the **Arizona Theatre Company** (602-256-6995); **Ballet**

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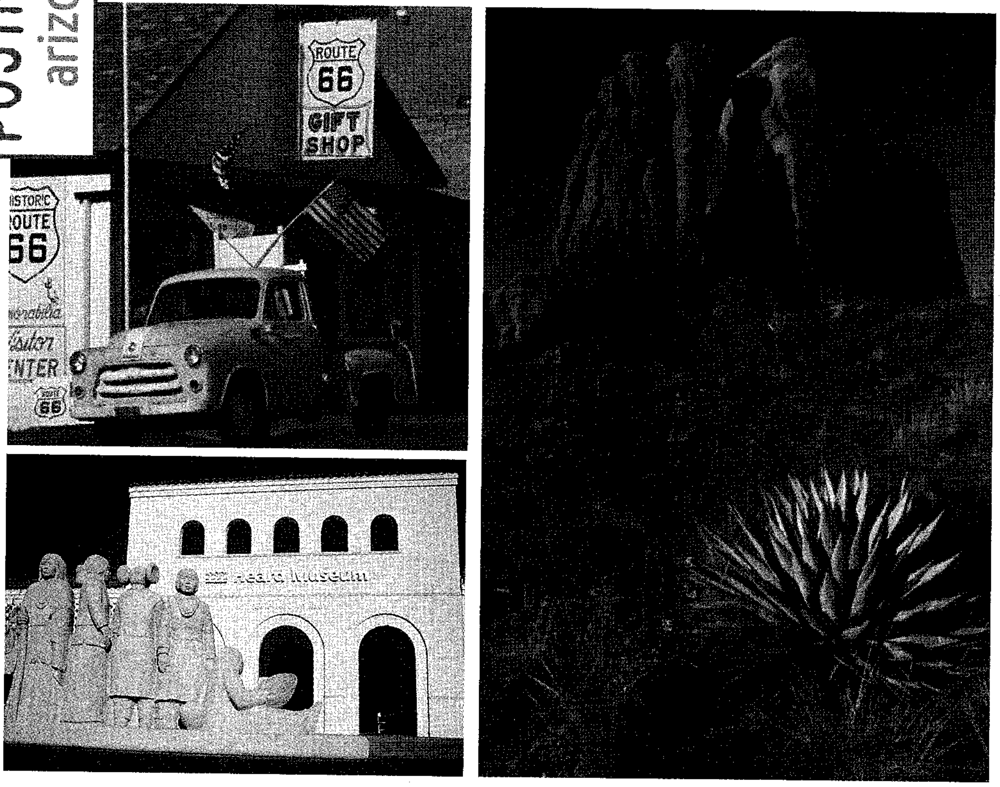
Arizona (888-3BALLET); the **Actors Theatre of Phoenix** (602-253-6701); and the new **Dodge Theatre** (602-379-2800), a high-tech center for plays, concerts, and conventions. **The Phoenix Art Museum** (602-257-1222) exhibits seventeen-thousand works divided into three "portals"—"Art of Asia," "Art of the Americas & Europe to 1900," and "Art of Our Time: 1900 to the Present." A lot of the best work being done in all those ghost-towns-turned-art-colonies winds up in the hundreds of galleries in Phoenix and its suburb, Scottsdale.

History and the desert make themselves felt even in the big city. The **Heard Museum** (602-252-8848) houses one of the world's finest collections of American Indian art and artifacts.

Red rock formations of the Sedona area tempt shutterbugs, as do sites along Route 66 and cultural riches from multigenre fests to the Heard Museum.



In Arizona, many things are constantly reborn, the new from the old, the cultural from the natural. Here, ". . . in the stony bonework of the Earth . . . sleep forms and styles enough for all the ages."

–Frank Lloyd Wright

Elsewhere in the metropolitan area you can visit the preserved ruins of an ancient Hohokam pueblo at **Pueblo Grande Museum** (602-495-0901) or see the two-thousand-year-old petroglyphs that are protected in **Deer Valley Rock Art Center** (623-582-8007).

Outside Phoenix, history and desert just grow more powerful and more present. On your way north to the Grand Canyon, visit the **Sharlot Hall Museum** (928-445-3122) in Prescott. Ms. Hall was vitally interested in preserving the vanishing past and collecting the workaday items, tools and furniture abandoned by pioneer families, as well as American Indian and Spanish artifacts. In nearby Verde Valley, are two famous ruins of the people who lived in the Southwest before Europeans arrived. One is at the **Tuzigoot National Monument** (928-634-5564), where you can visit a few of its 110 rooms. The other is **Montezuma Castle National Monument** (928-567-3322), a five-story cliff dwelling not unlike an apartment house built by the Sinagua Indians more than six hundred years ago.

The drive from Prescott to Sedona is exhilarating. The road passes through the **Kaibab National Forest** (928-635-8200) and winds up at the red rocks overlooking the **Sedona Cultural Park** (800-780-ARTS). Sedona's ambitious schedule of cultural events generally run through much of the year and includes the **Sedona International Film Festival** in early March, the **Sedona Shakespeare** (July and August), the **Putamayo World Music Festival** (late summer), and **Jazz on the Rocks** (late September). In Flagstaff, the **Museum of Northern Arizona** (928-774-5211) displays Indian art, pioneer history, and regional geology.

West of Flagstaff, a section of Route 66 brings you to Kingman, where you have a choice of two revived ghost towns to visit. My recommendation is Chloride (mile marker 53 on Route 93) where nearby you can view a fantastically abstract "The Journey," painted in the 1966 by a group of local residents led by artist and former miner, Roy Purcell. Or go west to Oatman, where residents share their turf with a herd of wild burros that wander in and out of town, and you can stay at the **Oatman Hotel** on Route 66 (520-768-4408) where Clark Gable and Carole Lombard spent their wedding night.

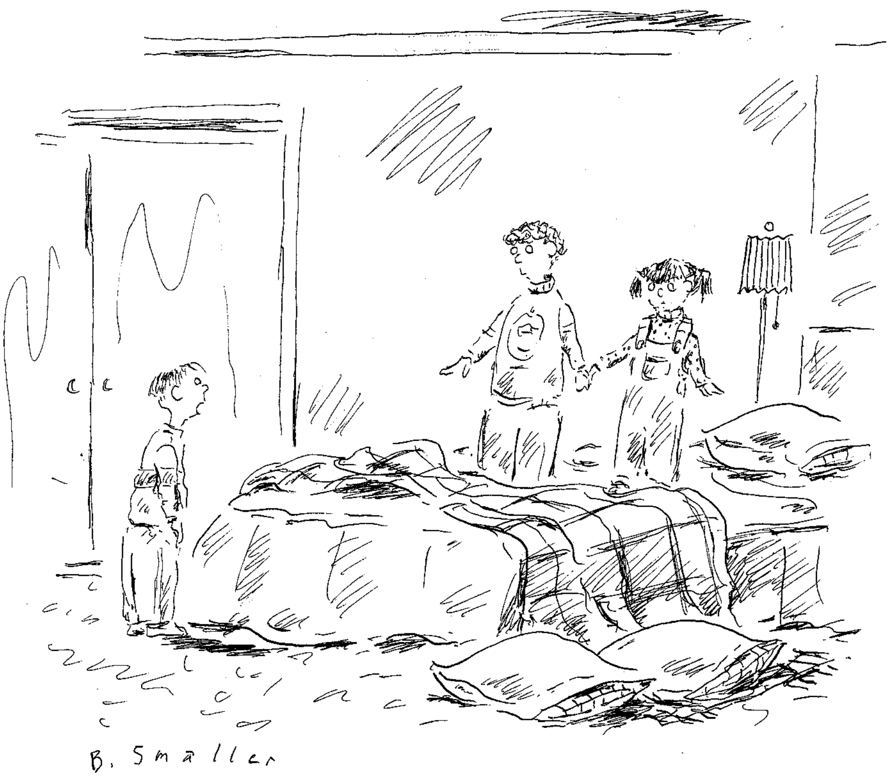
Arizona's Western Coast, bordered by the Colorado River, offers an annual **bluegrass festival at Bullhead City** in February (928-768-5819); **London Bridge** (800-2HAVASU), at Lake Havasu since 1971 (imported stone by stone from England after London sold it to the highest bidder back in the sixties); and, in Yuma, ancient petroglyphs on the walls facing the river and the **Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park** (928-783-4771).

East, southeast of Tucson, is my favorite resurrected town, Bisbee. Known for its saloon and bordello lore as well as for rich deposits of copper ore, it was never truly a ghost town. By the time mining ceased in 1975, artists had already moved in and begun renovating the Victorian houses perched on the town's steep streets, turning public buildings into restaurants, galleries, bookstores, and boutiques. Local artists sell their work in Bisbee's galleries, in the Old Town section of **Tucson's Artisans Market**, and through galleries in Phoenix, New York, and Los Angeles.

(Chris Howard is a New York-based freelancer who has ribbonned his way along Southwest roads astride a Honda CV750 motorcycle.)

Visit www.arizonaguide.com or call 866-842-7771 for more information on travel to Arizona.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ARIZONA TOURISM CLOCKWISE: RED ROCKS, ROADSIDE SCENE ALONG RTE 66; HEARD MUSEUM EXTERIOR



"Of course I'm allowed to jump on the bed, as long as I'm wearing my bed-jumping helmet."

• •

play the banjo, would cheer himself on, saying, "Go, Big Yin!" "I ruthlessly used folk music as a platform," he says now.

The Garrian Hotel, in Motherwell, Scotland, marks the spot where, in 1970, Connolly first began to "chase the witch," as he calls his comic soul-searching. Although he still brought his banjo onstage and sang songs, comedy was now the core of his performance; so was self-revelation. In the middle of his set, he suddenly threw himself on the floor and began speaking as if to a psychiatrist. "I was screaming, 'I've got issues! I've got issues! I've been abandoned!' " Connolly recalls. "Blah, blah, blah, blah. And the stuff about my mother and father came screaming out. Everybody laughed, 'cause they didn't believe it. I was really, really out there," he adds. "Nobody talked about stuff like this. No one on earth. I was plowing a field. It was just a brilliant feeling." Elton John, who hired Connolly as the opening act for his 1976 tour of America, says of his early shows, "I'd never seen anything like it in my life. He talked about his life, about everyday things, about chocolates and going to the seaside and swimming in the sea and the swimming costumes he had to wear, those horrible woolly things. Humor at that time was all about jokes, and people assuming other identities. Billy was being himself."

Connolly's combination of outrage and vulnerability struck a nerve. His series of comedy albums in the mid-seventies—which in Scotland sold as well as the Beatles and the Who—broadcast his outlandishness and won him a large fan base. The Scottish football team called on him for motivation in its bid for the 1974 World Cup; and, that same year, soon-to-be Prime Minister Harold Wilson sought Connolly's support in stumping for Labour voters. By 1975, at the age of thirty-three, Connolly had his own No. 1 U.K. hit single, a parody of Tammy Wynette's "D.I.V.O.R.C.E." After just five years of solo performing, he had become the most renowned Scottish entertainer since the genial music-hall star Harry Lauder. When he made his début at the London Palladium, on January 12, 1975—he booked the venue himself, "to prove to London I exist"—the curtain came up on Connolly singing Lauder's sentimental an-

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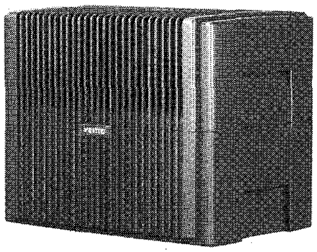

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them, "Keep Right On Till the End of the Road," with his head sticking through a life-size cardboard cutout of Lauder in kilt and sporran. After the song, the lights dimmed; when they came back up, Connolly was standing before the audience in a purple polka-dot suit. "I've come to bury Lauder, not to praise him," he said, and, in essence, that's what he did. (The Palladium's fire curtain had to be brought down at the finale because the management feared that the excited spectators would storm the stage. For a long time, the audience refused to leave the theatre.)

With his rough and raucous routines, Connolly brought the sludge of the Glaswegian streets to the stage. Although he had never sworn at home as a kid, he took profanity to new levels onstage. "It's a rhythm thing," he explains. "It's commas, exclamation marks, question marks—nothing to do with language. It's the rhythm of the street as compared to the rhythm of the drawing room." Connolly's swearing earned him a variety of journalistic epithets: "the Caliph of Crudity," "Scot of the anarchic," "the laureate of the loo," and "Man of the Devil"—this last from Scottish Presbyterians who took issue with Connolly's version of the Last Supper, which he reimagined in Gallowgate, Glasgow, with Jesus rolling into a pub, blind drunk, and urinating on the Roman soldier who pierced him with a spear on the Cross. Connolly's slangy meditations, counterpointed by his shaggy mane, turned the notion of the picturesque Scotsman on its head, and sent up the Scottish nationalism that such caricatures habitually conveyed. To the tune of "Scotland the Brave," for instance, he sang, "Land of polluted river / Bloodshot eyes and sodden liver / Land of my heart forever / Scotland the brave."

What Michael Caine calls Connolly's "almost barbaric humor" bridged cultures and got non-Scottish audiences past the barrier of his thick low-country accent. To Steve Martin, Connolly is "a Scottish timing machine, almost like a rapper with comic lines, opinions, and attitudes. He's physical onstage. It's like watching an opera." "He is the first comedian to represent the rock generation," the British talk-show host Michael Parkinson said, introducing Connolly to the BBC audience in 1975—a début that, despite Connolly's obvious nervousness, almost instantly made him a household name in Britain. Parkinson says, "I think of all the people we've had on the show—and there have been four or five hundred—we never had a bigger single reaction than we had to Billy the first time around."

From his early days in the folk clubs, Connolly was a kind of dandy. He wanted the sight of himself alone to trigger an air of expectation. "When I walk in the door, they're gonna say, 'Wait till this guy gets on,' " he says of his loud shirts and striped trousers, which were also meant to broadcast the message, he explains, that "I'm not even defeated by me." As his venues got bigger, so did his sartorial ambitions: "I thought, I want to look like Alice Cooper. I want to look like rock and roll. I don't want to look like comedy. I want to be sexy. I want to be remembered." Polka dots, satins, and flared trousers became his trademark. "Wearing ridiculous clothes meant you could say what you pleased," he says. "You didn't represent anything, so you couldn't be blamed for anything." Connolly took to wearing "Banana Boots"—a pair of yellow boots in the shape of bananas (now enshrined in Glasgow's People's Palace)—or Wellingtons during his performances. For "The Great Northern Welly Boot Show," a 1972 musical he co-wrote and performed in, he sported a series of fabulous Wellies: the Wishing Welly, the Cowboy Welly, the Jack Buchanan Evening Welly—named for the debonair song-and-dance man—which had silk lapels. In his routines, Wellington boots replaced the kilt as the ironic icon of Scottish life, and he mythologized them in song: "If it wasn't for your Wellies where would you be? / You'd be in the hospital or infirmary, / 'Cause you would have a dose of the flu or even pleurisy, / If you didn't have your feet in your Wellies."

Connolly looked outrageous, he sounded outrageous, and he also lived outrageous. He had married the interior designer Iris Pressagh in 1969, and was the father of two children, Cara and Jamie, but the centripetal force of Connolly's career increasingly pulled him away from his family—and from himself. If his humor onstage

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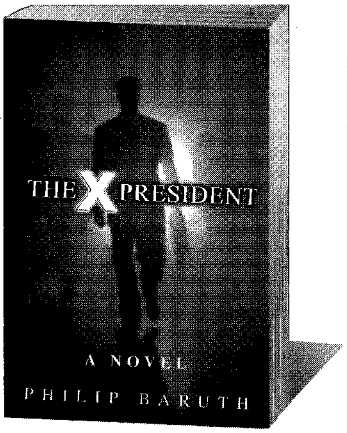

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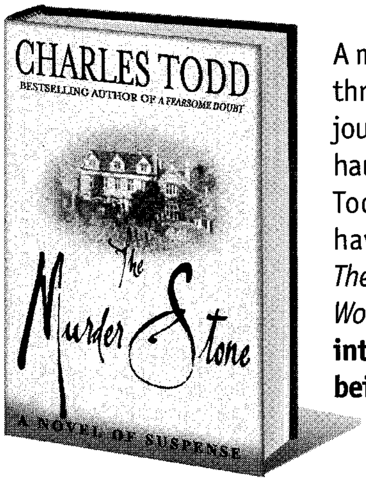

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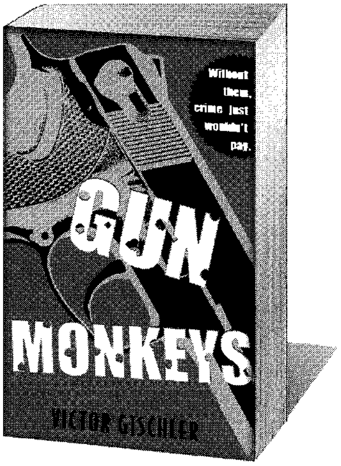

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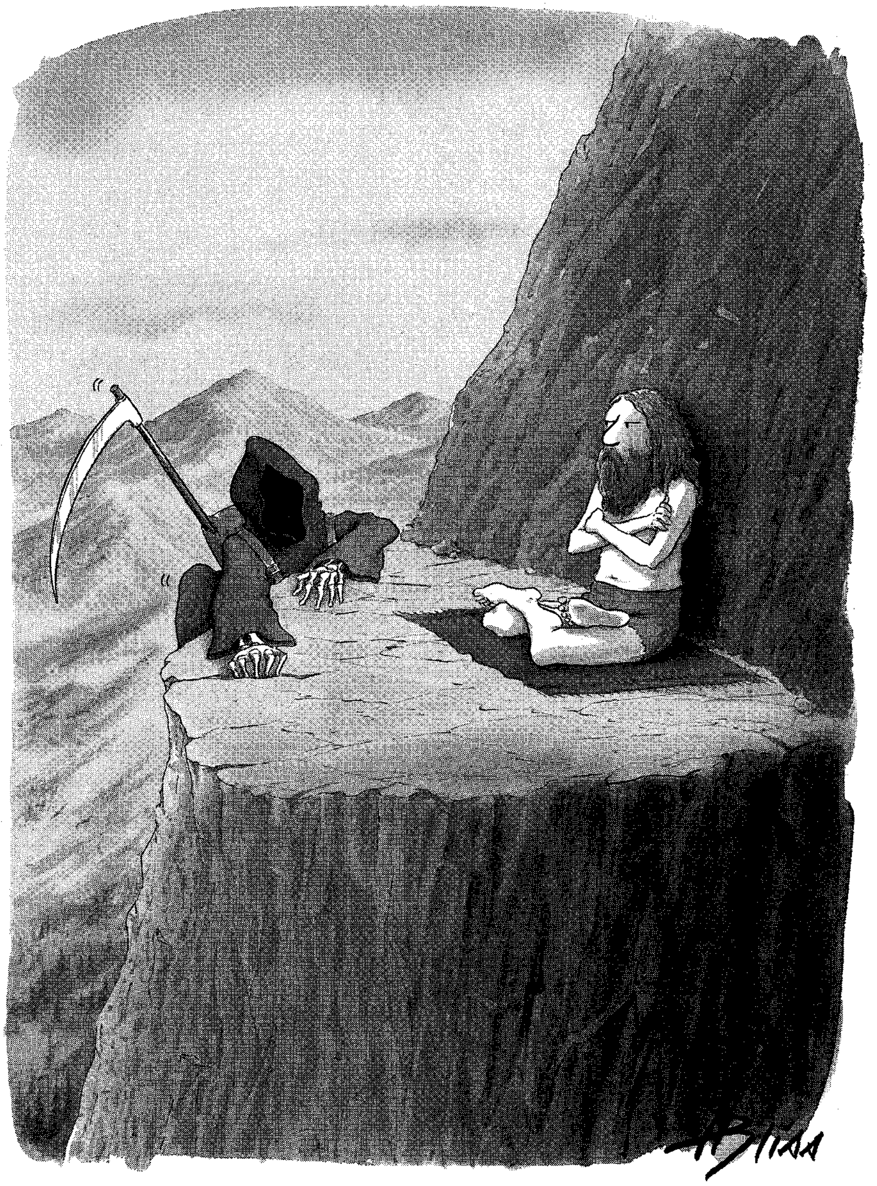
proved Nietzsche's dictum that "shame is inventive," his legendary drinking bouts offstage proved that it was also murderous. "A well-balanced person has a drink in both hands," he liked to say then, but drinking truly unhinged him. "I was flying. I was out there," he says. He took to naming his tours according to his beverage of choice: "The Gin Tour," "The White Wine Tour," "The Brandy Tour." Connolly, who said he saw himself "as a James Dean rock 'n' roll tragedy" and claimed to have "A-levels in guilt," would later indict himself as "a lousy father" and "a drunk absentee." He was "out of love," and rarely at home. "I had all the success I had ever dreamed of," he says. "My offstage life was in such an unsolvable mess, I thought, I'll just walk away from it. I decided to seek oblivion. I'll just drink, and then I'll die. It was a nice prospect." He adds, "The people I knew were very unattractive to me. Strangers were attractive to me. Strangers will do me better. There will be no judgment around here."

Connolly remembers calling his manager late one night because he was in a phone booth in Primrose Hill and couldn't find his way out. His manager eventually found him asleep in the booth. "There was nothing wrong with the door," Connolly says now. "I just couldn't find which wall *was* the door. That was my dilemma." At the London night club Tramps, in a feat that is still a record for the club, Connolly, in one sitting, downed thirteen bottles of Chablis, a drink he preferred to imbibe in pint glasses.

Alcohol kept his mood and his level of aggression elevated. "I didn't mind a good punch-up at all," he says. "I used to take delight in being the world's only violent hippie." On one occasion, after overhearing a patron make racist remarks to the owner of an Indian restaurant, Connolly ran across six tables to dive at the man and pull him into the street. "I remember the Beatles talking about him, saying, 'You have to run away,' " Idle says of Connolly. "Ringo will tell you he was a terrifying drunk." During the filming of "Water" (1985), in which Connolly co-starred with Michael Caine, the cast was riding in a bus up a mountain road in Toulouse, and Connolly recalls "putting my hands over the driver's eyes, which was a great trick of mine at the time." "Michael Caine got me down from that," he says, counting the star's intervention as "another one of those pennies that dropped." He adds, "He had a very long talk to me the following day about boozing. He said, 'Don't blow it.' " Stephenson says, "We see photographs of him sometimes from that period, and Billy will go, 'Look, the Bogeyman.' I notice there's a certain admiration there that scares me."



Although Connolly did eventually stop drinking—in 1985—the night in 1980 when he fell for Stephenson he downed thirty brandies at a London restaurant; the miniature bottles were lined up in front of him like chess pieces. At that time, Stephenson was starring with Rowan Atkinson, Mel Smith, and Griff Rhys Jones in the astringent BBC 2 satire "Not the Nine O'Clock News." (She subsequently did a season on "Saturday Night Live.") Cocky, well-educated, and beautiful, Stephenson was a bright young thing of twenty-nine, who aspired to be a wild young thing. "My I.Q. worked against my ability to be funny," she says. Always a good student, she needed the protection of a good script and a lot of rehearsal. She was blindsided by the spontaneous Connolly, who was not like any comedian she'd ever met. He was "an alpha male, a crazy, hilarious, charismatic savage." Over dinner, she watched as he ate Dover sole with his hands—his dining style at the time. "What an animal!" she writes. "I was thrilled."

"It's a mysterious connection between the two of them," Steve Martin says. "It's a bit unseen." Connolly was divorced from Iris in 1983, and he had

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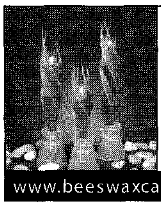

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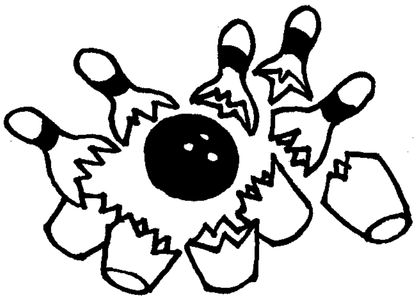
three daughters with Stephenson—Daisy, Amy, and Scarlet—before they were married, in Fiji, in 1989, while bagpipes played "You Take the High Road" and the theme from "The Archers," and the girls looked on. "I just recognized something I wanted," Connolly says. Stephenson's professional admiration and attentiveness as well as her compassion had a particularly potent allure for Connolly. "I replicated his sister," Stephenson says. "She was mother, friend, sibling—she was his protector. He internalized that." She adds, "That's why he's not in prison." In fact, when Connolly describes Florence, now a retired teacher living in Scotland—"She was the only person I could talk to about anything. She found my rebelliousness really funny. She was academic, bright, and intellectual"—he could just as easily be talking about Stephenson. "Pamela has saved my life on many occasions," he said at the BAFTA ceremony in January. Of the many things that changed in Connolly's life after he met Stephenson—his diet, his regimen, his social milieu—the biggest change was to his belief that a comedian had to be "either blasting light at the audience or in Stygian darkness." "I bullied him into letting go of that notion," Stephenson says. "He was fortunate that he did see what many comedians don't—that it's possible to let go of the mythology that says that in order to be funny you have to have this dark, untouchable, dangerous side to you that will eventually kill you." "Whatever it is that's driven me along with this odd talent that I have," Connolly said in 1992, "to do it without happiness, without solace, is a complete waste of time and energy. It's an incomplete journey. . . . I want my art to make me happy. . . . I don't want to be that clown with a tear in his eye."

When Connolly is pressed to define the differences between him and his wife, he says, "I'm Francis of Assisi. She's Cromwell." Certainly, Stephenson's rigor is apparent in their Los Angeles house, with its work and holiday flowcharts and a framed slate sign in the front hall that reads "Be Nice or Leave!" Connolly says that he brings "unpredictability" and "lightness to the party." Stephenson brings intellectual discipline and containment. "She is captain of a ship that's kind of a rudderless firework," Martin says. In her memoir, Stephenson writes of being joined to Connolly "at the wound." But for her Connolly's self-destructiveness was counterbalanced by his talent. "She used to get very jealous at first, because I didn't prepare anything," he says. "She would be standing in the wings, just going, 'Oh, my God, how did you do that?' I'd say, 'I don't know.' " He continues, "When she was a comedian, I didn't like it. When there's two people in the same business in the house, the one with the huge problem is the one for whom the phone rings all the time. You're saying, 'Oh, God, make it be for her.' " After their children were born, Stephenson, as she puts it, "fell out of love with performing." She decided to go back to school and study psychology. "Comedy and psychology are very closely linked—just different approaches to the examination of human behavior," she says. Besides, she adds, "one comedian per family is probably enough."

From the outset, Connolly and Stephenson's romance was tabloid fodder. By the time the couple decided to relocate to America, in 1991, Connolly, who says, "I've been booed longer and louder than Hitler," had been more or less rumbled by the British press. The end of his first marriage, his romance with Stephenson, his sobriety, his wealth, his upward mobility all contributed to the nation's steady drizzle of gossip—"the roar of the uninformed," he calls it—in which he was variously portrayed as working-class hero-traitor, renegade-softie, and blasphemer-bore. Connolly and Stephenson, who are both bumptious and outspoken when provoked, didn't always help their own cause. He took an occasional swing at intrusive paparazzi; she, in her punk pink-hair moment, once poured water down the back of a notoriously pompous Radio 4 pundit. Increasingly, in Connolly's eyes, Britain was becoming



the Land of No, whose "lust for failure" was a subject for comment from the stage. "I hate my country for the way it holds people back, tells them they're not good enough," he said. "I hate the tabloid press for what it does to people, never letting them be intelligent." When Connolly imagines his funeral, he hopes for a skywriting plane to fly above his burial plot, spelling out "Fuck the Begrudgers!" From his catbird seat in California, his comic observations have assumed a kind of droll disenchantment. "In America, if you become successful they put your name on the pavement and let people walk on it," he said. "In Britain, they don't wait for your name to be engraved, they just walk all over you anyway."

America has, according to Connolly, slowed the rhythm of his speech, but it has done nothing to slow the pace of his career. "My career is in a growth state," he says, "which is very odd, because I've just turned sixty. The tickets are hotter than they've ever been." Still, he adds, "The Americans are determined to cut down on my tours. They keep bombing gigs of mine. Abu Dhabi, Dubai—that's a hot area for me. I've never done Baghdad—I'd get four thousand people a night, easy-peasy." The public's burgeoning interest in Connolly is a result both of the memoir and of his developing film career. "Movies cost me money," he says. "My manager looks on them as an expensive hobby." Nonetheless, since the late seventies, when he appeared in a television play, "The Elephants' Graveyard," written by his friend Peter McDougall, Connolly has turned in a series of convincing character portraits—in "Mrs. Brown," as a gay tennis pro in Stanley Tucci's "The Impostors," and as an aging rocker in "Still Crazy," among others.

The first time Connolly walked in front of a camera, he says, "I just did what I thought would be right. I looked right into the heart of it, right through the pupil of its eye." Connolly has grown more handsome over the years. "I've become windswept and interesting," he says. John Madden, the director of "Mrs. Brown," explains his appeal: "The camera either sees and builds upon somebody's physical presence or, in some way, it robs them of a physical pres-

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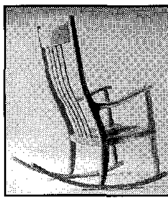

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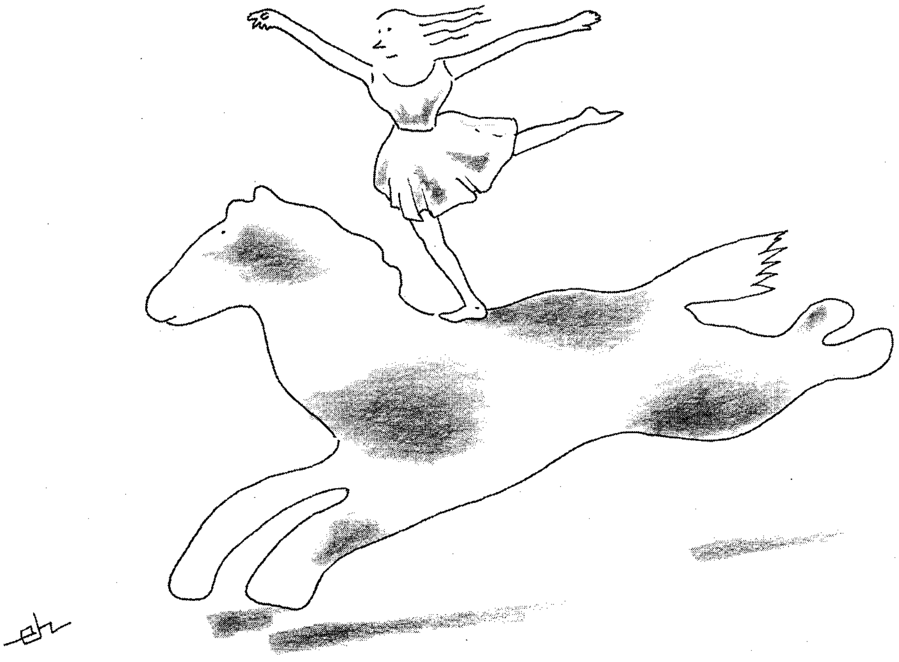


She Should Put Up the New Curtains in the Kitchen Before They Get All Wrinkly

• •

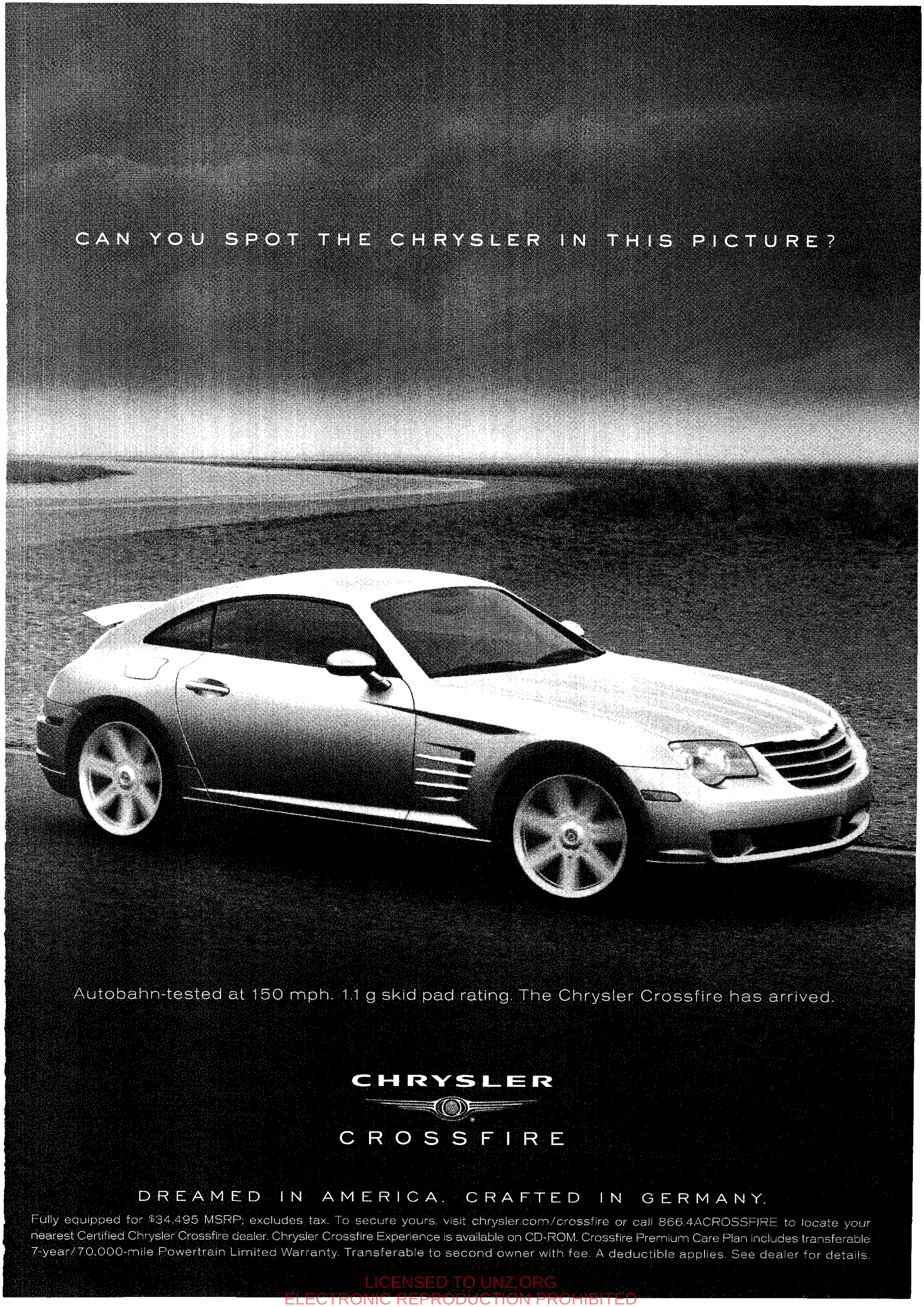
ence. Billy had a really kind of towering and glamorous screen presence that one wouldn't necessarily have anticipated. He had a kind of transparency." At first, before the shooting of "Mrs. Brown" began, Madden had some apprehensions about Connolly in the role. He says, "Winging it is exactly where his genius resides. My concern was that winging it was going to be something that would automatically mean a casual, uninvestigated performance." He arranged a meeting with Connolly. "I basically sat him down and said, 'Look, this isn't a joke,' " Madden says. "What I was confronted with at that point was an extraordinary kind of humility. I didn't expect that."

Earlier this year, Connolly went to New Zealand to shoot a film called "The Last Samurai," which stars Tom Cruise. ("We're pretending to be in Japan," he explained from the set. "There's no room to have a battle in Japan, you see, without a high-rise building in the background.") "The Last Samurai" and another film in which Connolly appears, "Timeline," will be released later this month. Although this year's comedy tour was put on hold for his movie work, Connolly will tour New Zealand in early 2004. He has always been clear-eyed about his future—or lack thereof—in film. "I'm not a film star," he has said onstage, "and I don't think I will be. I'm being absolutely, ruthlessly honest here. But if they make 'Braveheart,' and they ask every Scotsman who can speak and stand upright and they don't fuckin' ask you, *then* . . ."

Connolly is a trout fisherman; he even has a black-green-and-gold fly named after him. In the late nineties, when he was scouting for property in Scotland, Connolly had, according to Stephenson, only one criterion: "I want to be able to go from my bedroom to where I can fish, without changing my slippers." In 1998, the couple took possession of Candacraig ("Pamelot," to their friends), a turreted seventeen-room baronial mansion in Aberdeenshire, where they spend most of their summers. In the entrance hall of the mansion, a portrait of Connolly as a Scottish laird hangs above flickering votive candles ("Our leader," the frame reads); a painting of Stephenson as the Queen of Australia, with the Sydney opera house in the background and corgis at her feet, has pride of place in the living room. But Connolly can usually be found by a loch on the River Don, at the edge of the twelve-acre property, working the riffles. "Do you know what happiness is?" he says. "It's casting beautifully into the sun and watching your line unfold. It's a small thing. I always thought happiness eluded me. I had an image of happiness which was like throwing beach balls and laughing and throwing your children in the air. Like a railway poster. When I found contentment and replaced the word 'happiness' with 'contentment,' I realized I was happy all along." In many ways, Connolly resembles the venerable trout, which has only two functions: to conserve energy and to hide. "The more you come into the daylight and tell the truth, the happier you become, the more your shadow goes away," Connolly says. Yet, both on the road and off, he has the habit of solitude. "He's a little like a hermit," Stephenson says. "He just likes being alone."

Still, at his sixtieth-birthday jamboree, the summer before last (he was born in November, but he prefers summer celebrations), with the mansion decked out in ten thousand dollars' worth of tartan, Connolly played host to his many friends—among them Izzard, Idle, Martin, Dame Judi Dench, Robin Williams, Michael Parkinson, Ewan McGregor, the Duke and Duchess of York, and Prince Charles and Camilla Parker Bowles. (Balmoral, the Queen's Scottish estate, is just eighteen miles away.) While the guests amused themselves with activities organized by Stephenson, Connolly smoked his pipe, listened to the radio, and played his banjo.

Often, as they did that weekend, the Connollys gather friends and locals—"anybody we can find who can play a musical instrument, which could range from the best guitarist in the world to Bella, who teaches fiddle in the village," Stephenson says—and stroll down from the house to a clearing in a clump of ancient trees. There, sitting around a bonfire, they sing and play. "It's the best," Connolly says of the tradition. "We request stuff from each other, the same stuff all the time. Steve Martin's amazing at 'Sally Goodin'—'Strawberry pie, strawberry puddin' / I'd give it all up just to see Sally Goodin'." As the fire crackles and the sparks fly up, Connolly, who calls himself "the welder who got away with it," strums his banjo and sings into the night. ♦



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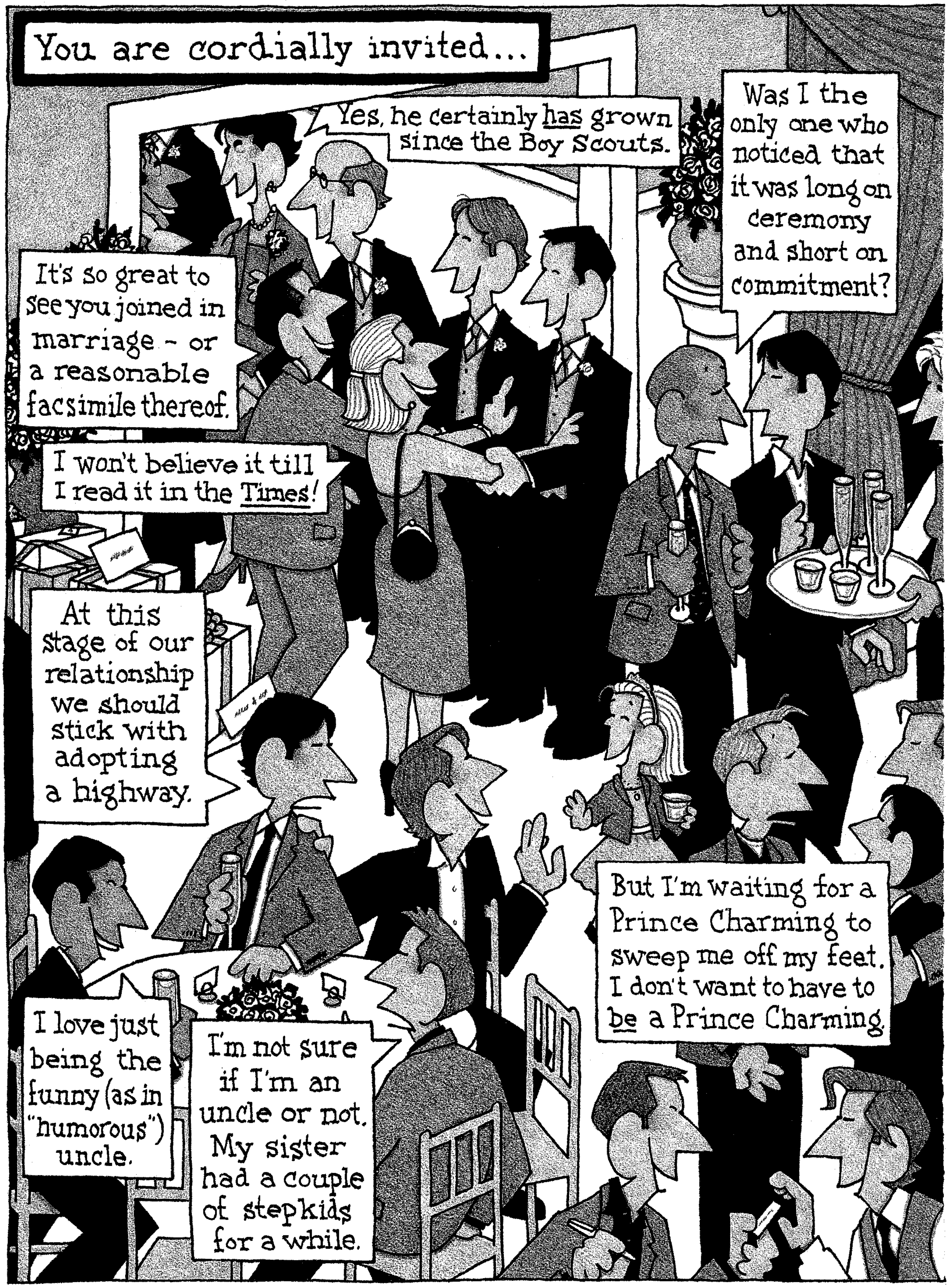
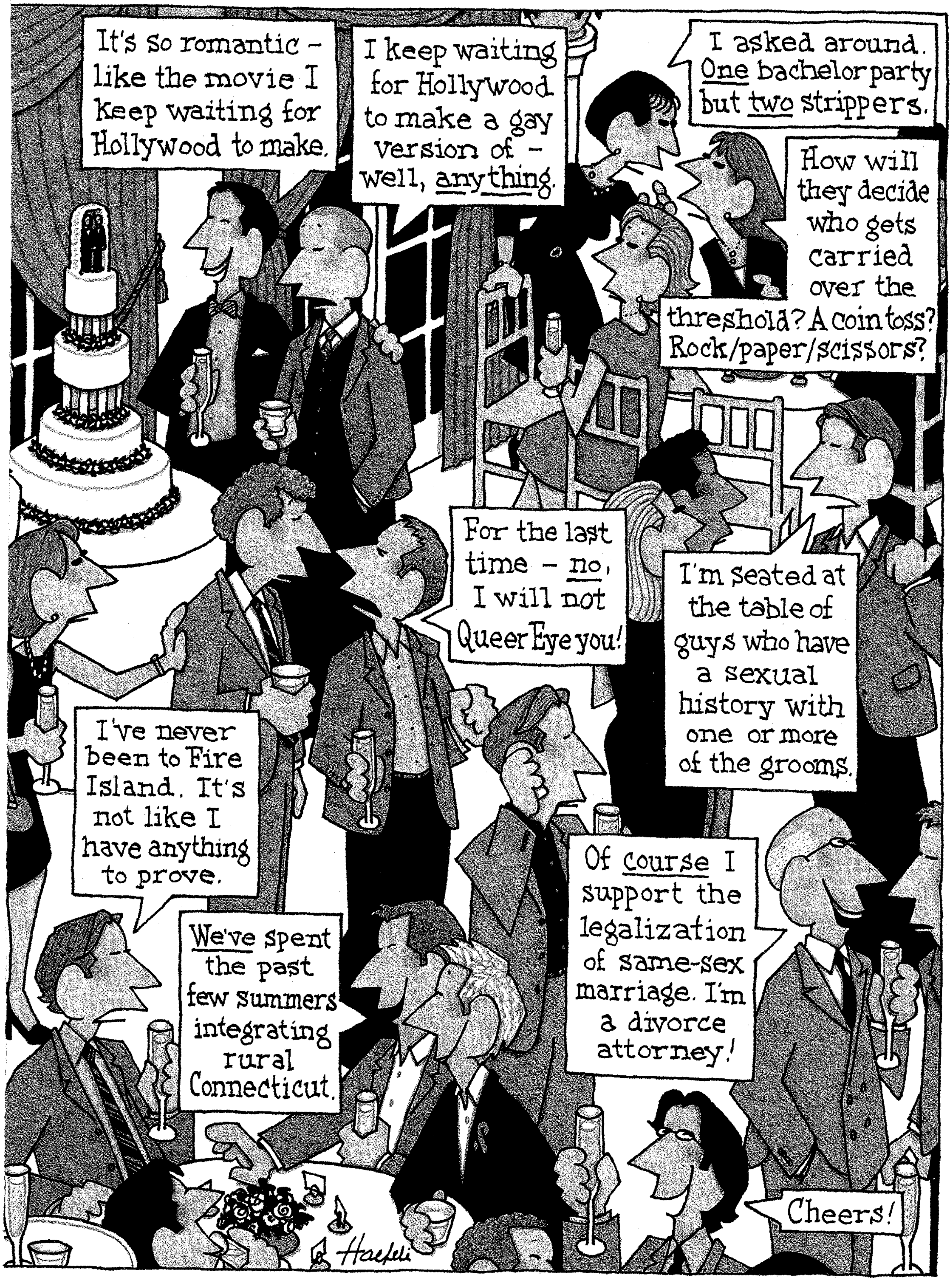
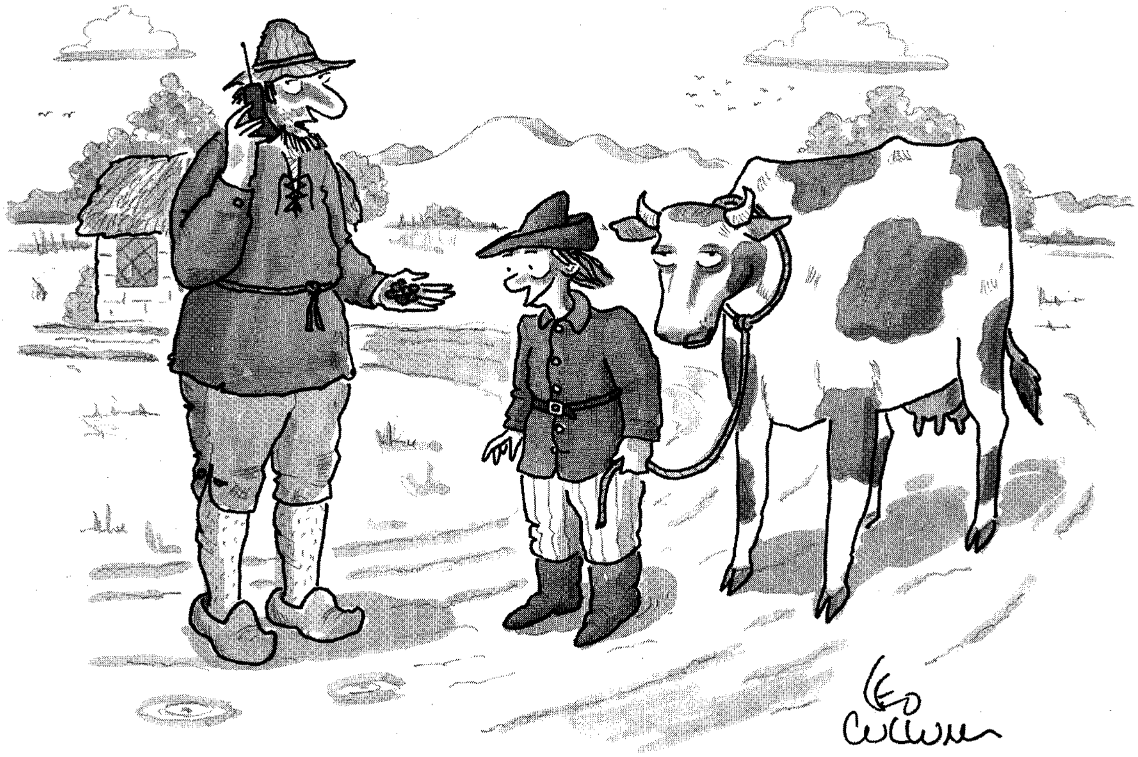
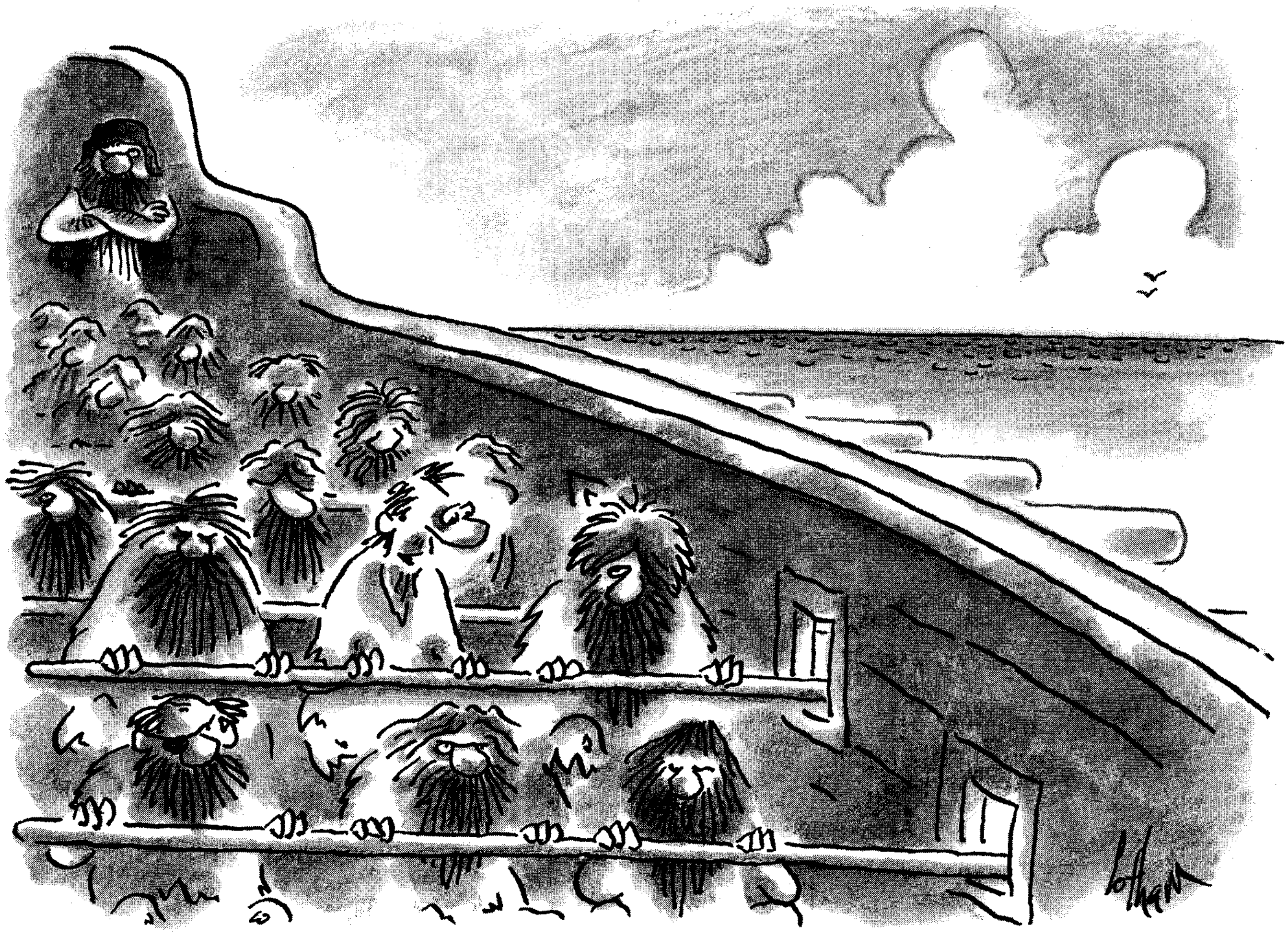

You are cordially invited...
Yes, he certainly has grown since the Boy Scouts.
Was I the only one who noticed that it was long on ceremony and short on commitment?
It's so great to see you joined in marriage - or a reasonable facsimile thereof.
I won't believe it till I read it in the Times!
At this stage of our relationship we should stick with adopting a highway.
But I'm waiting for a Prince Charming to sweep me off my feet. I don't want to have to be a Prince Charming.
I love just being the funny (as in "humorous") uncle.
I'm not sure if I'm an uncle or not. My sister had a couple of stepkids for a while.

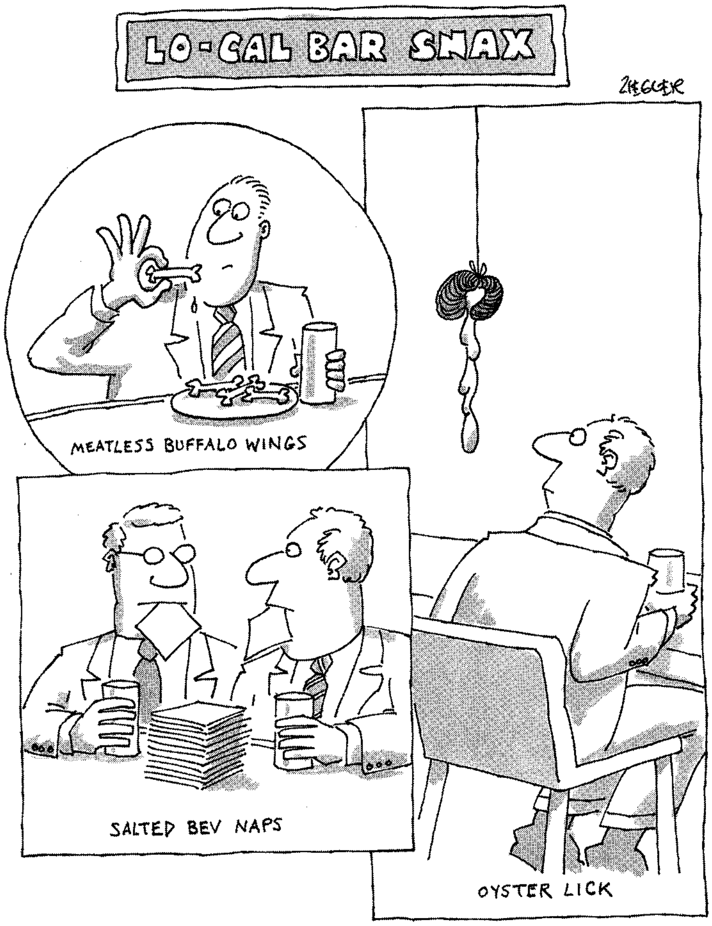

It's so romantic – like the movie I keep waiting for Hollywood to make.
I keep waiting for Hollywood to make a gay version of – well, anything.
I asked around. One bachelor party but two strippers.
How will they decide who gets carried over the threshold? A coin toss? Rock/paper/scissors?
For the last time – no, I will not Queer Eye you!
I'm seated at the table of guys who have a sexual history with one or more of the grooms.
I've never been to Fire Island. It's not like I have anything to prove.
We've spent the past few summers integrating rural Connecticut.
Of course I support the legalization of same-sex marriage. I'm a divorce attorney!
Cheers!
Haefeli

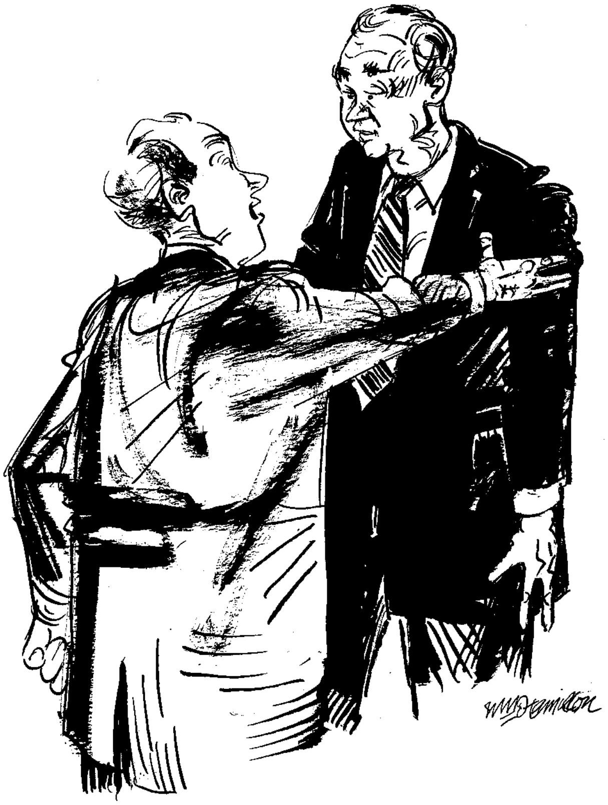


"Can I get back to you? I'm with a customer."

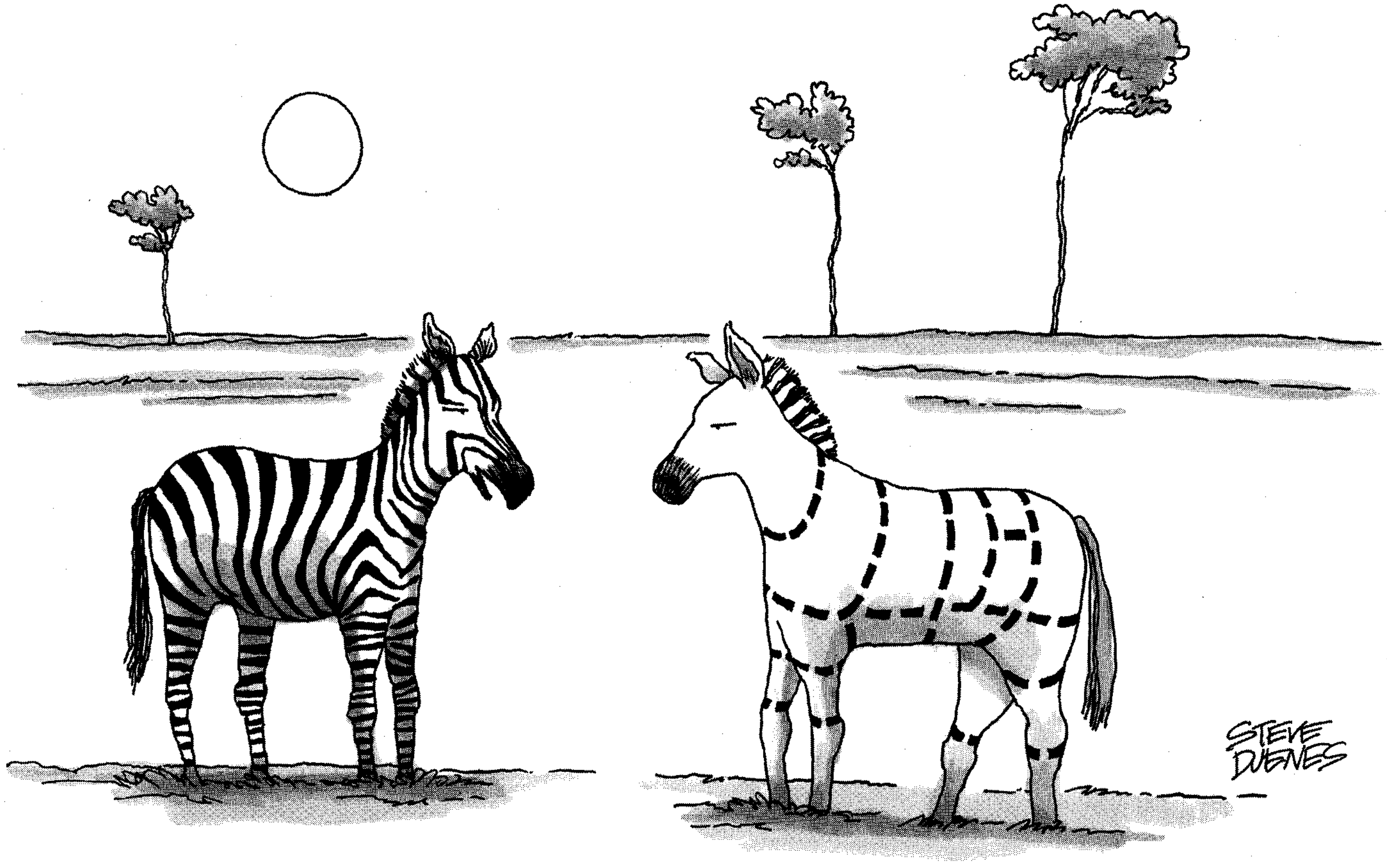


"May I sit by the window?"

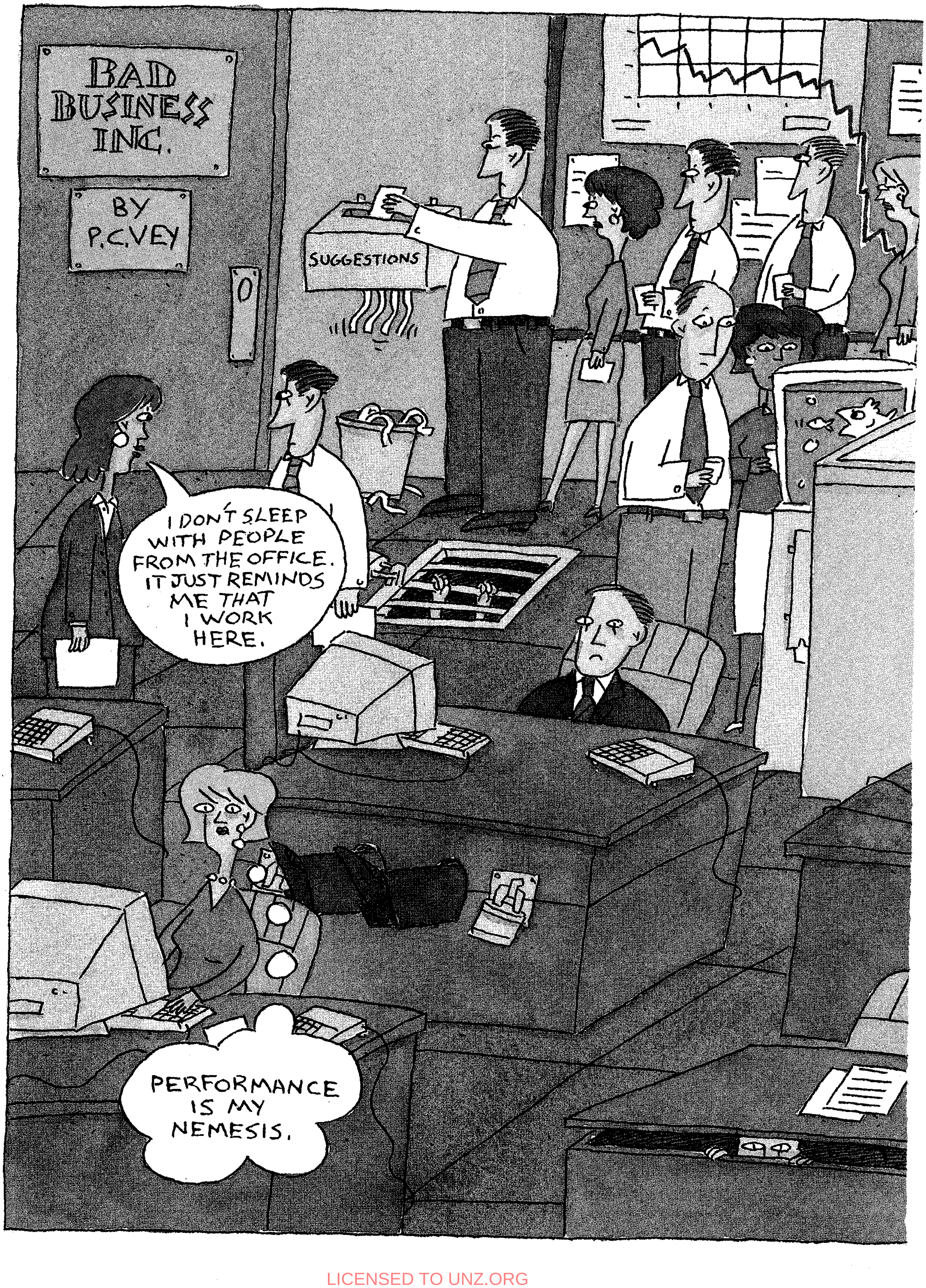

LO-CAL BAR SNAX
ZIEGLER
MEATLESS BUFFALO WINGS
SALTED BEV NAPS
OYSTER LICK

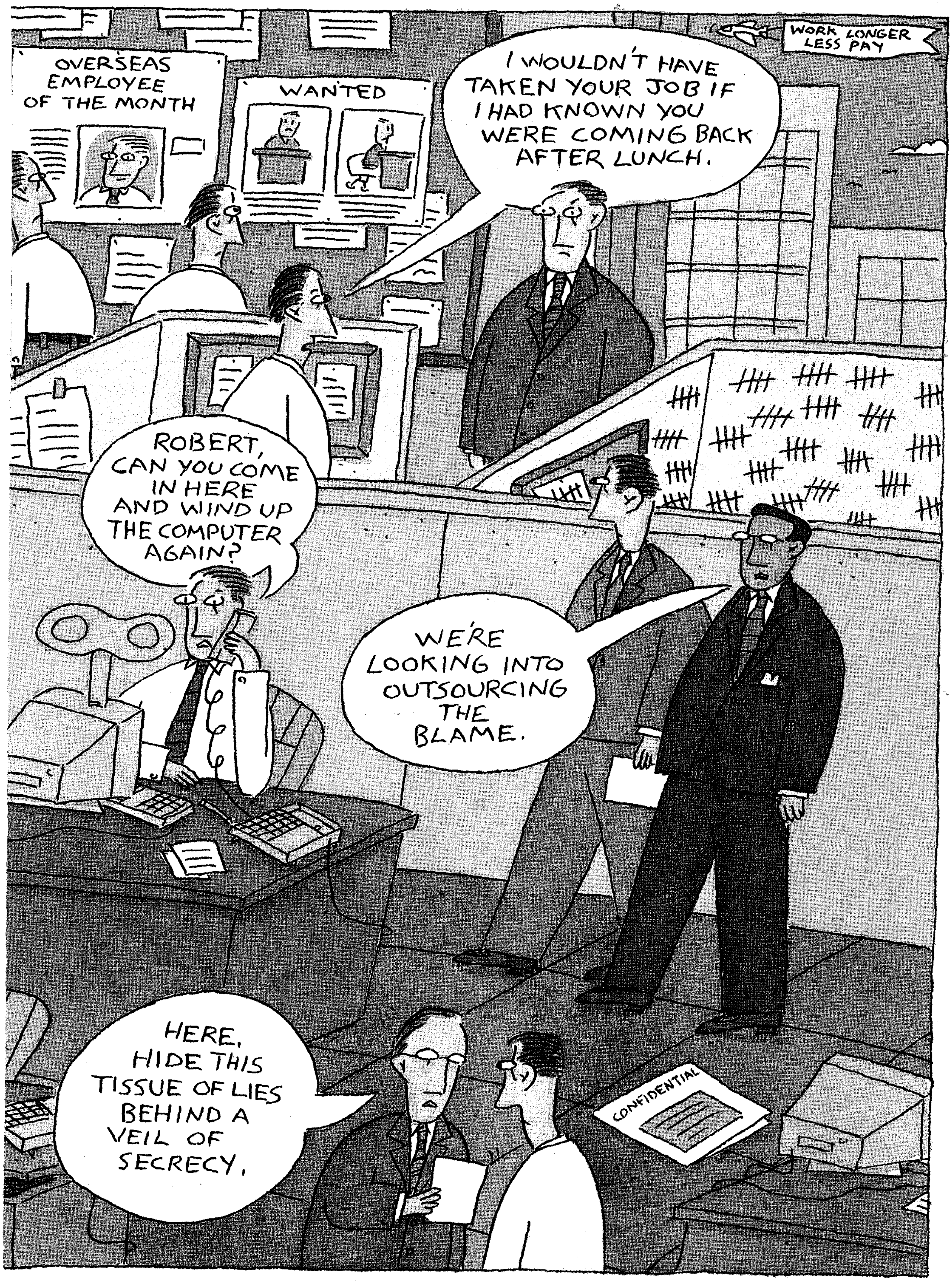


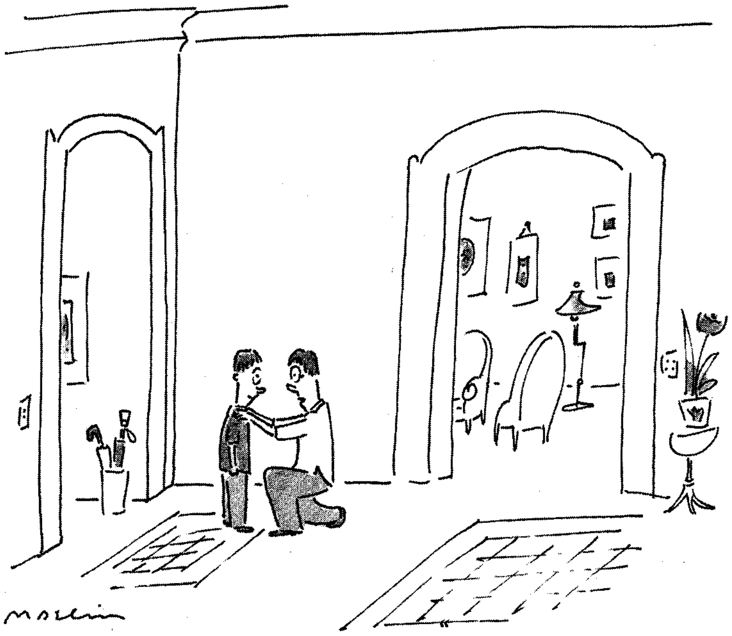
"You're better than ever at something we don't need done anymore."


STEVE DUENES

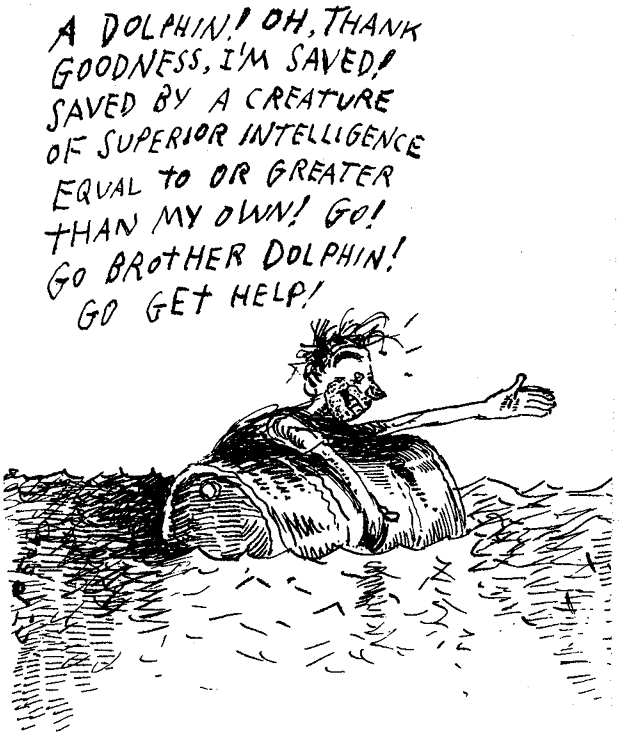
"Bummer."


BAD BUSINESS INC.
BY P.C.VEY
SUGGESTIONS
I DON'T SLEEP WITH PEOPLE FROM THE OFFICE. IT JUST REMINDS ME THAT I WORK HERE.
PERFORMANCE IS MY NEMESIS.

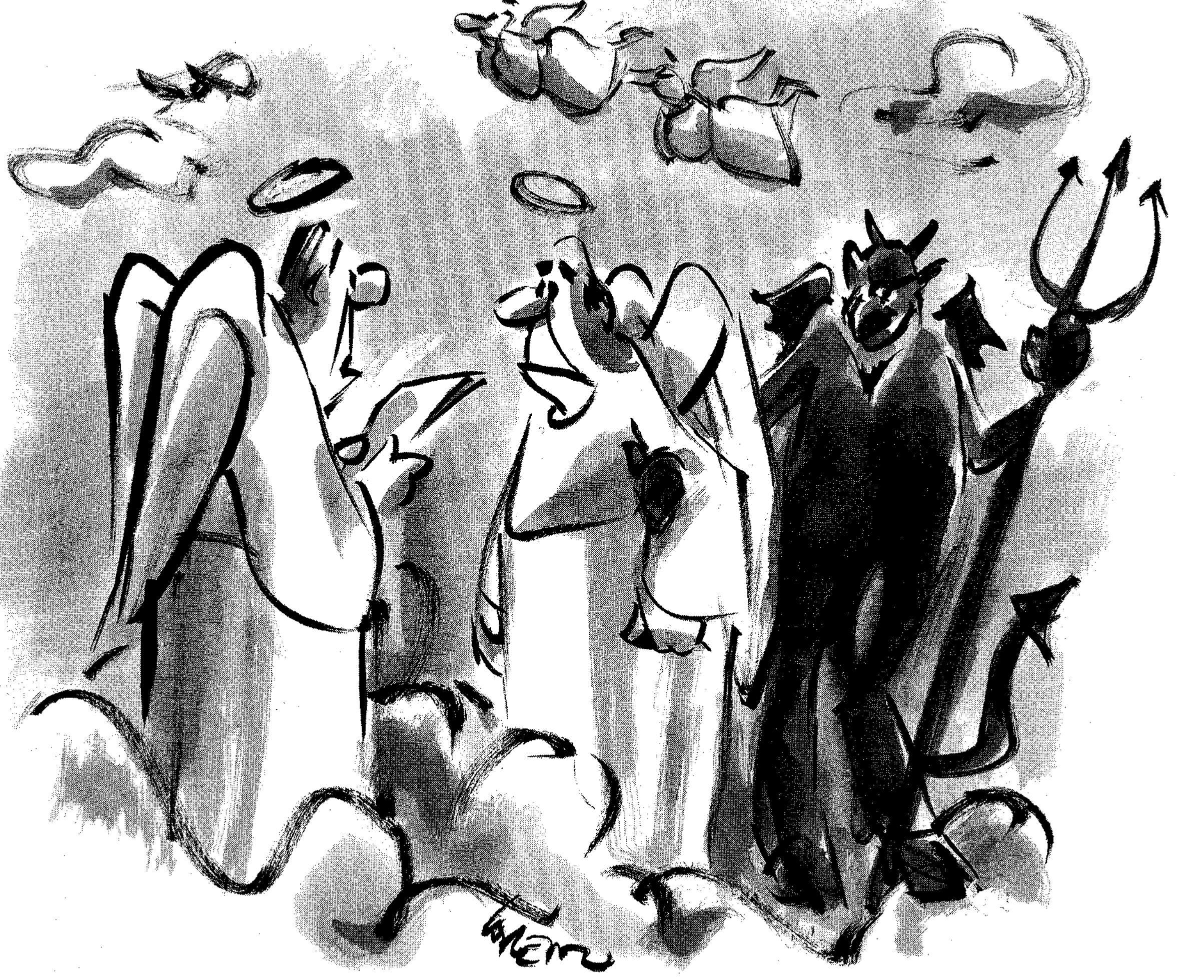

OVERSEAS EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH
WANTED
WORK LONGER LESS PAY
I WOULDN'T HAVE TAKEN YOUR JOB IF I HAD KNOWN YOU WERE COMING BACK AFTER LUNCH.
ROBERT, CAN YOU COME IN HERE AND WIND UP THE COMPUTER AGAIN?
WE'RE LOOKING INTO OUTSOURCING THE BLAME.
HERE. HIDE THIS TISSUE OF LIES BEHIND A VEIL OF SECRECY.
CONFIDENTIAL



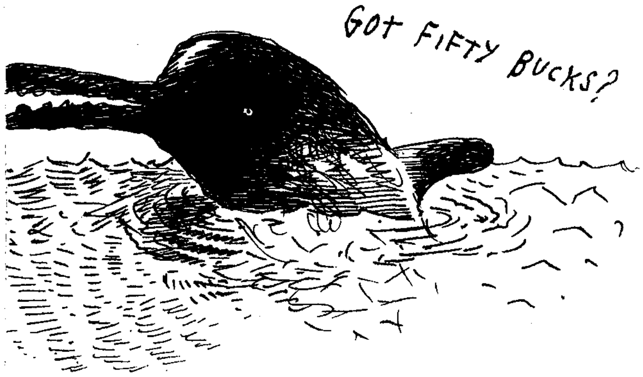
"You go back and tell your playground buddies that your daddy was only accused of committing a felony—he was never convicted."

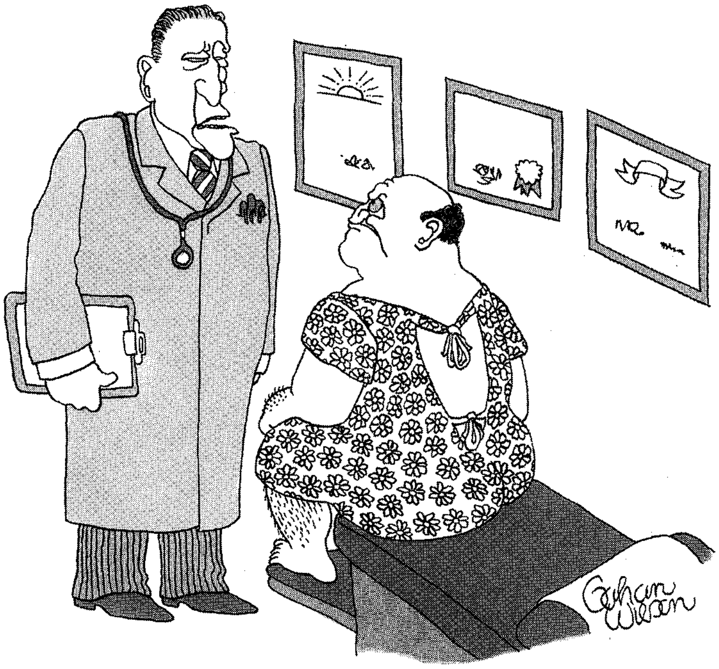


A DOLPHIN! OH, THANK GOODNESS, I'M SAVED! SAVED BY A CREATURE OF SUPERIOR INTELLIGENCE EQUAL TO OR GREATER THAN MY OWN! GO! GO BROTHER DOLPHIN! GO GET HELP!

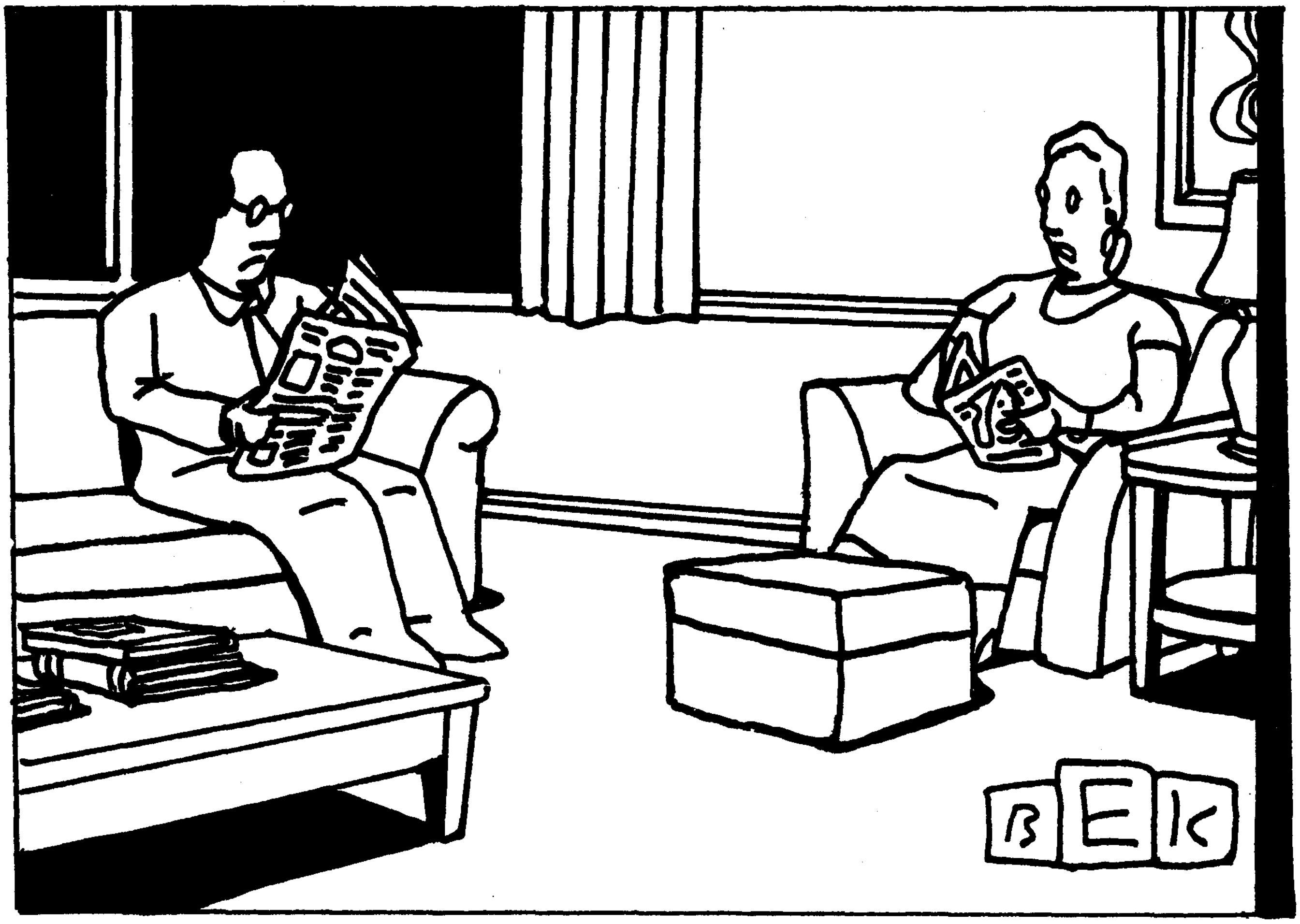


"Sorry, Ed, but the revisionist historians finally caught up with you."

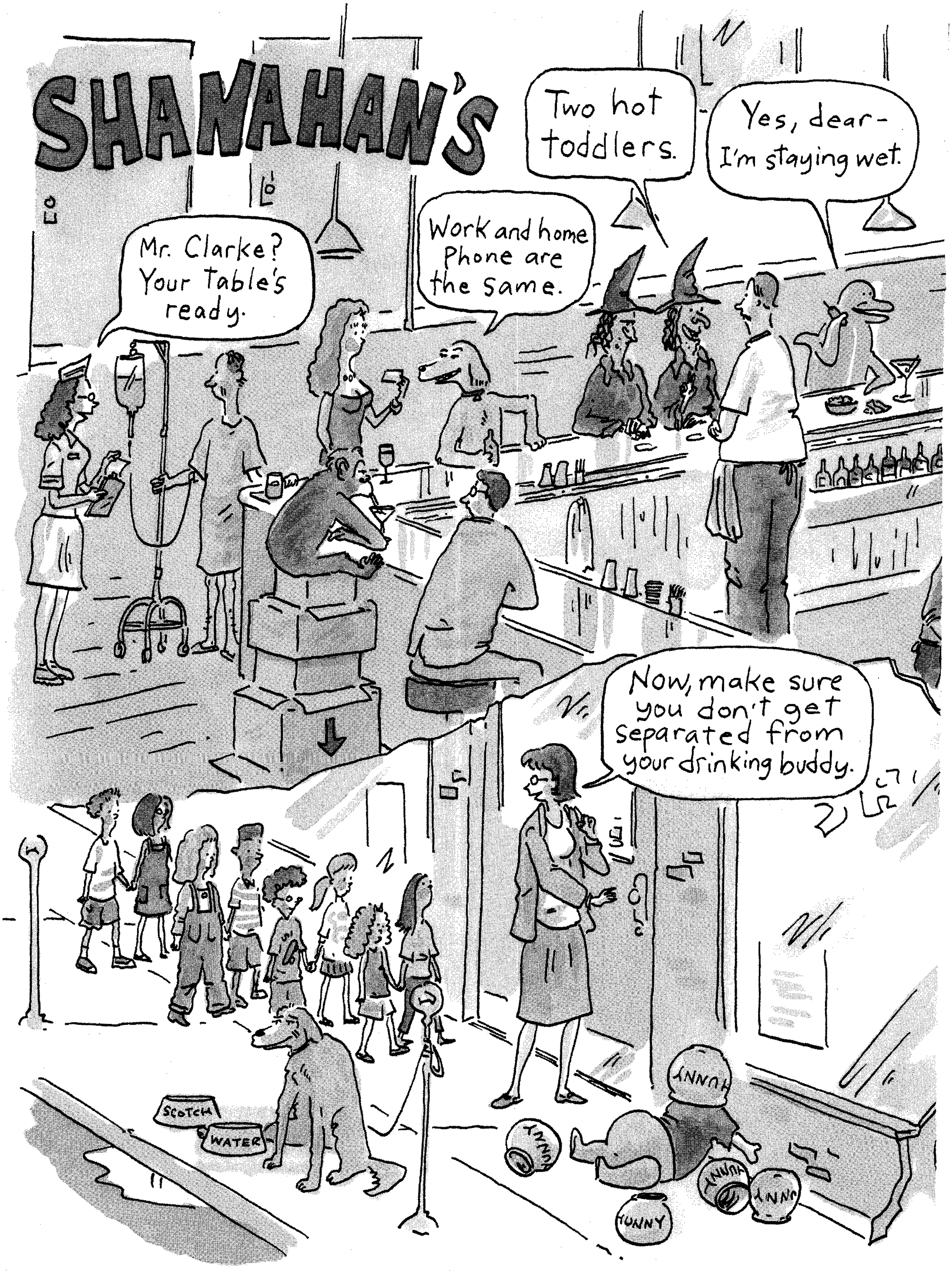

GOT FIFTY BUCKS?

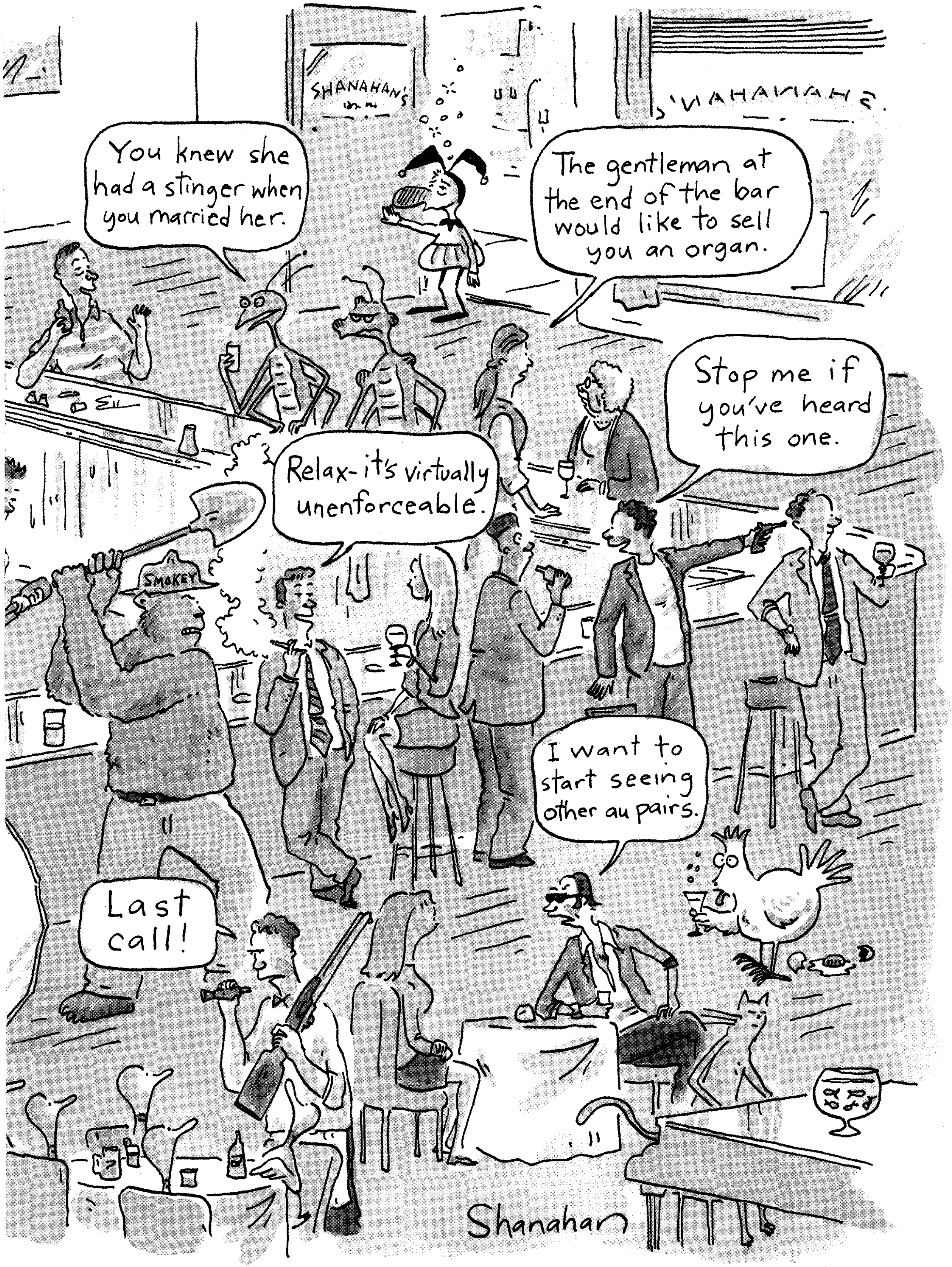

Gahan Wilson

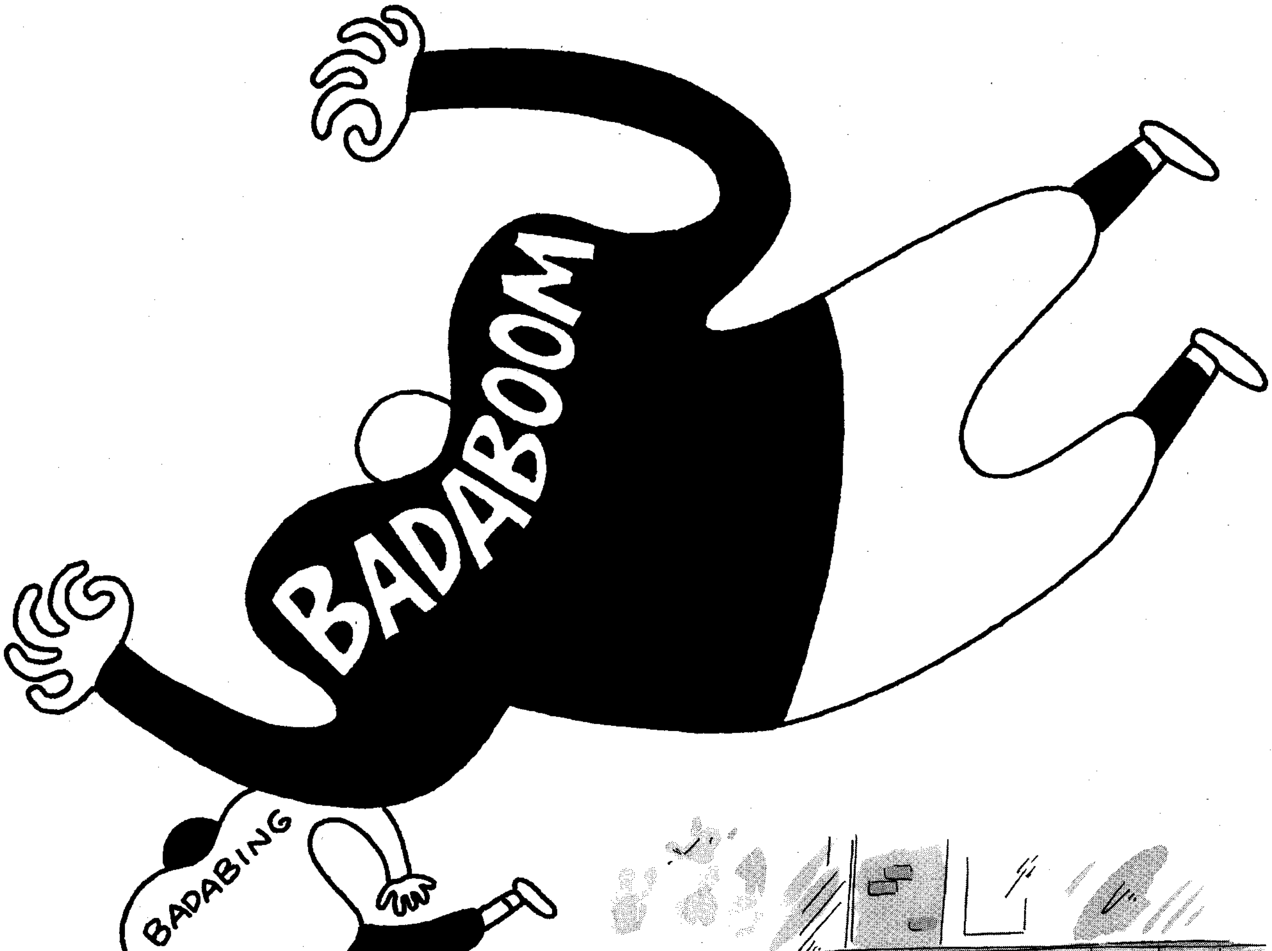
"Humiliation is a very important part of the process, Mr. Keifer."

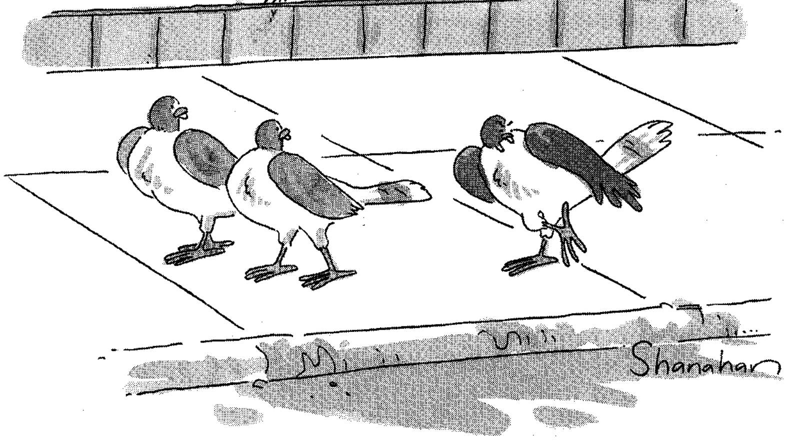


"Did you remember to kill the Petersens?"

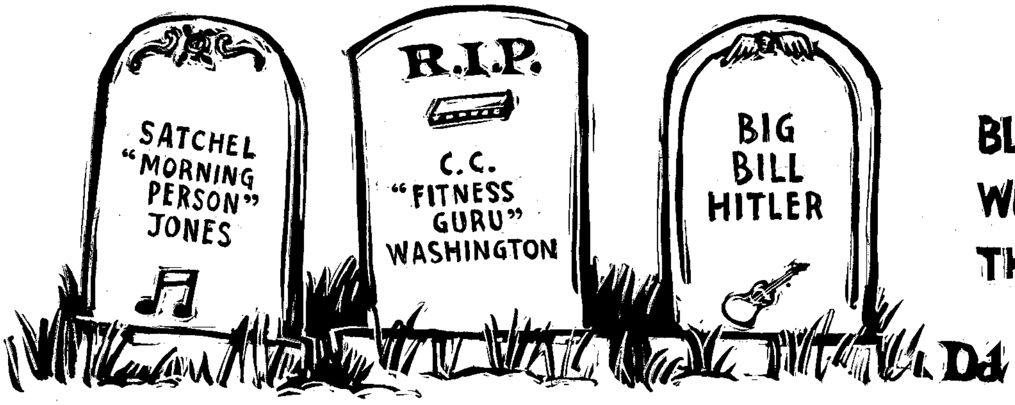

SHANAHAN'S
Mr. Clarke? Your table's ready.
Work and home phone are the same.
Two hot toddlers.
Yes, dear- I'm staying wet.
Now, make sure you don't get separated from your drinking buddy.
SCOTCH
WATER
HUNNY
HUNNY
HUNNY
HUNNY
HUNNY


SHANAHAN'S
SHANAHAN'S
You knew she had a stinger when you married her.
The gentleman at the end of the bar would like to sell you an organ.
Stop me if you've heard this one.
Relax- it's virtually unenforceable.
SMOKEY
I want to start seeing other au pairs.
Last call!
Shanahan

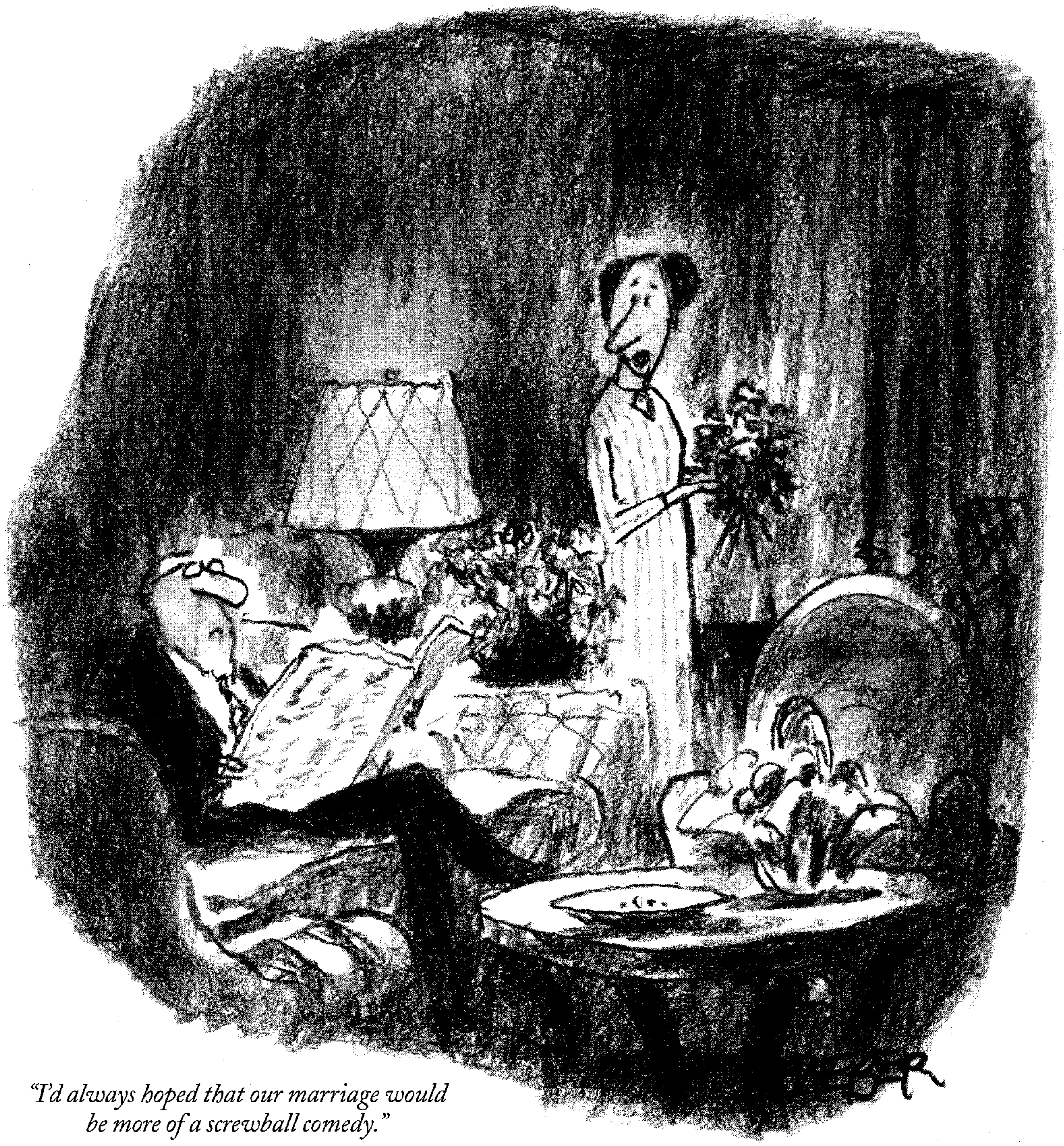

BADABOOM
BADABING
CBarsotti



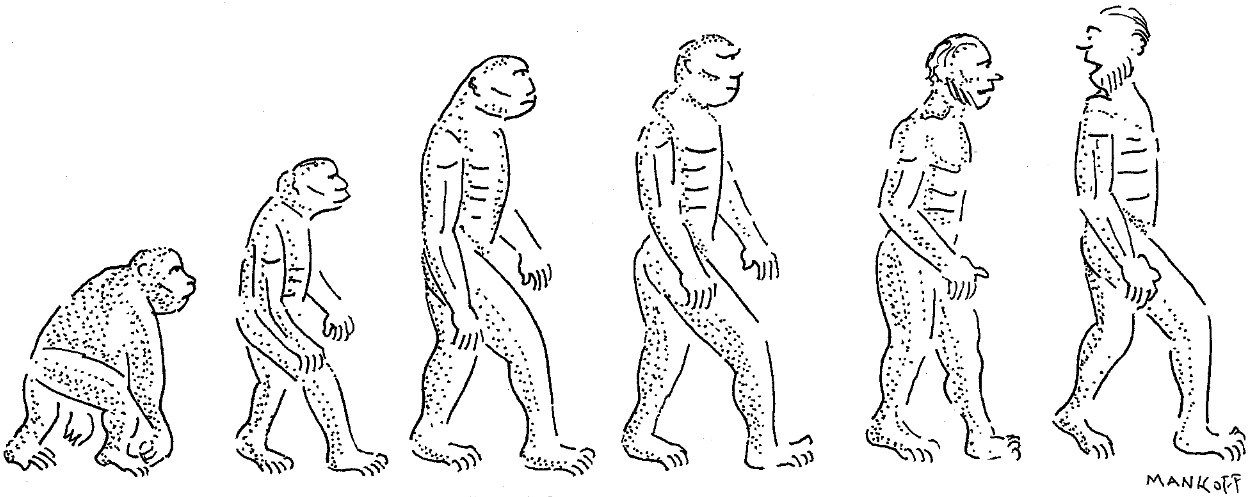
"Goddam dogs!"


SATCHEL "MORNING PERSON" JONES
R.I.P.
C.C. "FITNESS GURU" WASHINGTON
BIG BILL HITLER
Dd

BLUES MUSICIANS WHO NEVER FOUND THEIR AUDIENCE



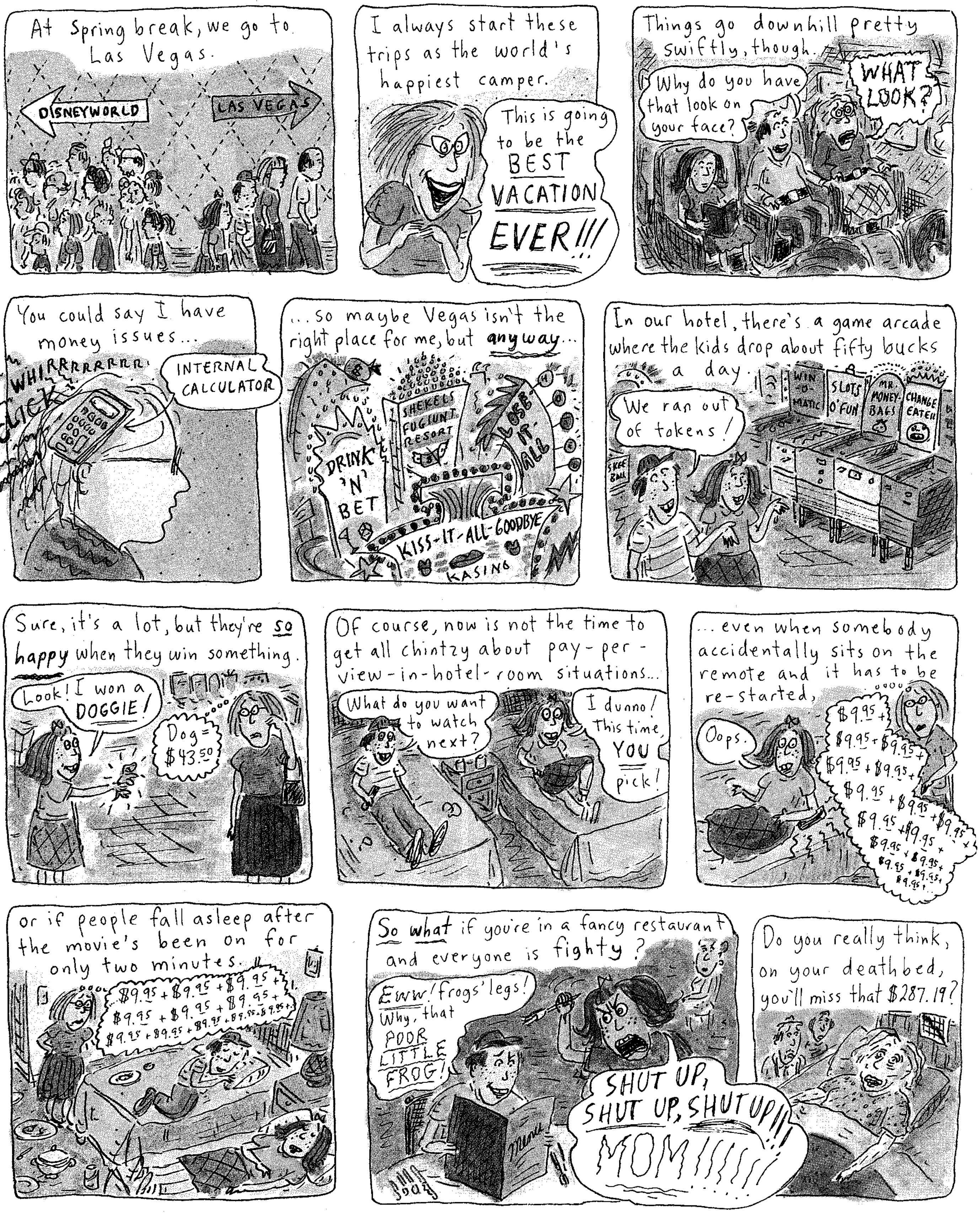
"I'd always hoped that our marriage would be more of a screwball comedy."

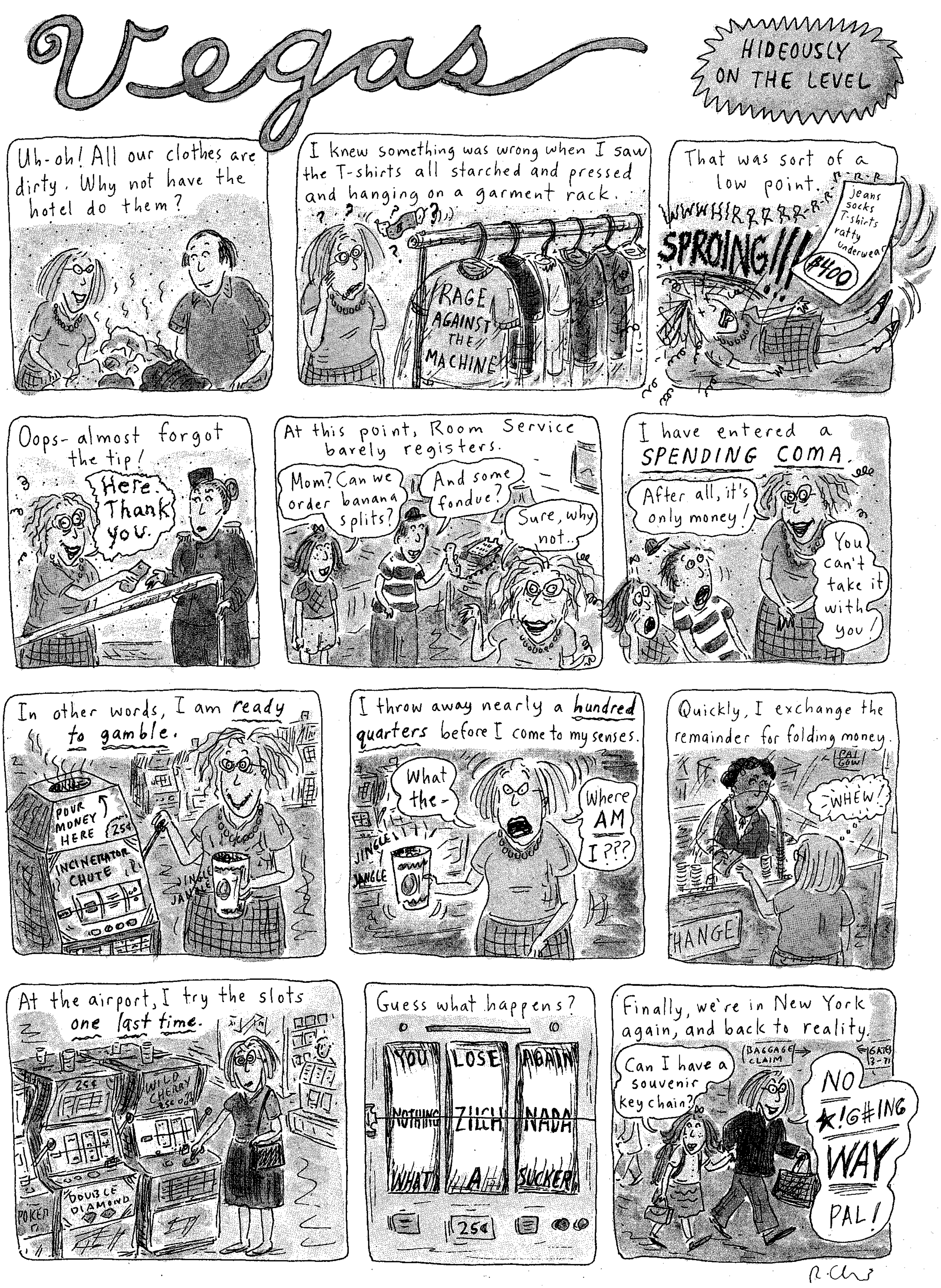


"Hey! Cut out the grab-ass."

ALL TOO TRUE, UNFORTUNATELY

Viva Las


At Spring break, we go to Las Vegas.
DISNEYWORLD
LAS VEGAS
I always start these trips as the world's happiest camper.
This is going to be the BEST VACATION EVER!!!
Things go downhill pretty swiftly, though.
Why do you have that look on your face?
WHAT LOOK?
You could say I have money issues...
WHIRRRRRRRRR
CLICK
INTERNAL CALCULATOR
...so maybe Vegas isn't the right place for me, but anyway...
SHEKELS FUGIUNT RESORT
LOSE IT ALL
DRINK 'N' BET
KISS-IT-ALL-GOODBYE KASINO
In our hotel, there's a game arcade where the kids drop about fifty bucks a day.
WIN-O-MATIC
SLOTS O'FUN
MR. MONEY-BAGS
CHANGE EATER
SKEE BALL
We ran out of tokens!
Sure, it's a lot, but they're so happy when they win something.
Look! I won a DOGGIE!
Dog = $43.50
Of course, now is not the time to get all chintzy about pay-per-view-in-hotel-room situations...
What do you want to watch next?
I dunno! This time, YOU pick!
...even when somebody accidentally sits on the remote and it has to be re-started,
Oops.
$9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 +
or if people fall asleep after the movie's been on for only two minutes.
$9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 + $9.95 +
So what if you're in a fancy restaurant and everyone is fighty?
Eww! Frogs' legs!
Why, that POOR LITTLE FROG!
SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP!!!
MOM!!!!!!
MENU
Do you really think, on your deathbed, you'll miss that $287.19?

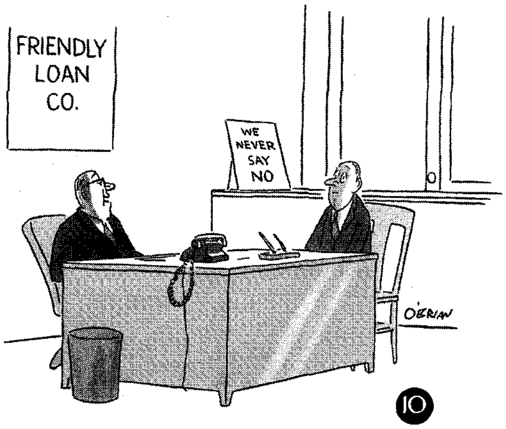

Vegas
HIDEOUSLY ON THE LEVEL
Uh-oh! All our clothes are dirty. Why not have the hotel do them?
I knew something was wrong when I saw the T-shirts all starched and pressed and hanging on a garment rack.
RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE
That was sort of a low point.
WWWHIRRRRR-R-R
R-R-R
SPROING!!!
jeans
socks
T-shirts
ratty
underwear
$400
Oops- almost forgot the tip!
Here. Thank you.
At this point, Room Service barely registers.
Mom? Can we order banana splits?
And some fondue?
Sure, why not..
I have entered a SPENDING COMA.
After all, it's only money!
You can't take it with you!
In other words, I am ready to gamble.
POUR MONEY HERE
25¢
INCINERATOR CHUTE
JINGLE JANGLE
I throw away nearly a hundred quarters before I come to my senses.
What the-
Where AM I???
JINGLE
JANGLE
Quickly, I exchange the remainder for folding money.
PAI GOW
WHEW!
HANGE
At the airport, I try the slots one last time.
25¢
WILD CHERRY 25¢ odd
DOUBLE DIAMOND
POKER
Guess what happens?
YOU
LOSE
AGAIN
NOTHING
ZILCH
NADA
WHAT
A
SUCKER
25¢
Finally, we're in New York again, and back to reality.
BAGGAGE CLAIM
GATE 3-11
Can I have a souvenir key chain?
NO *!G#ING WAY PAL!

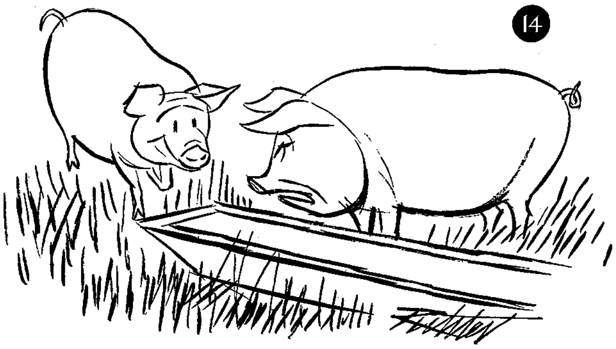
PUZZLING DEVELOPMENTS

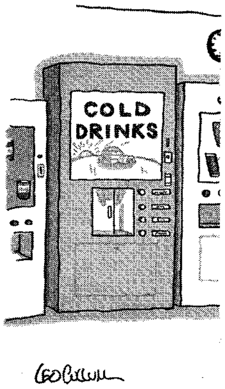
CARTOON CROSSWORD

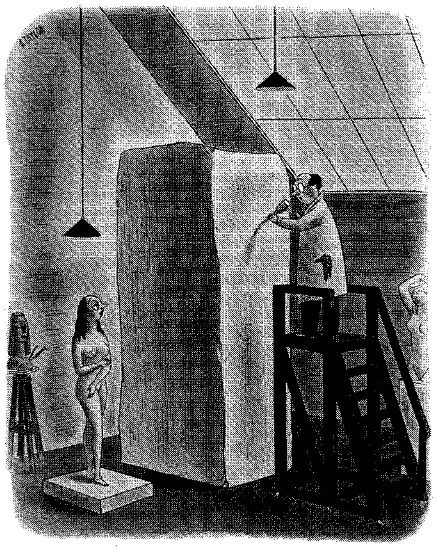
The experience of doing a crossword puzzle is similar to that of looking at a cartoon: there's a moment when the two halves (the clue and the answer in one case, the picture and the joke in the other) come together with a satisfying mental snap. The crossword grid at right is a standard-issue puzzle, with one difference—actually, ten differences. Ten of the clues instruct you to look at the appropriate *New Yorker* cartoon below; figure out the caption and you've got the solution. (Answers in next week's Mail.)

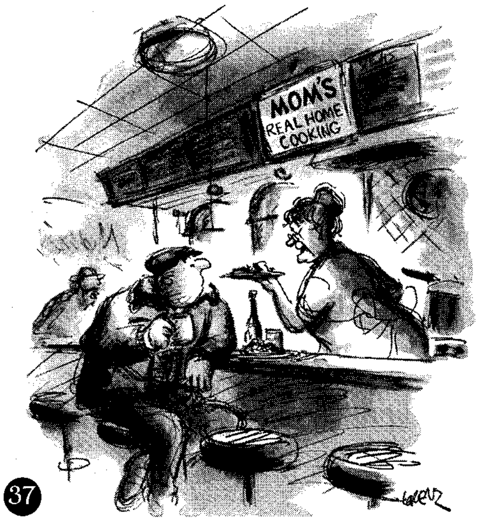
1	2	3	■	■	4	5	6	7	8	■	9	10	11	12
13			14	■	15					■	16			
17				18						19				
■	20							■	■	21				■
■	■	■	22				■	23	24			■	■	■
25	26	27				■	28			■	29	30	31	32
33					■	34				35	■	36		
37					38						39			
40			■	41					■	42				
43			44	■	45			■	46					
■	■	■	47	48			■	49				■	■	■
■	50	51			■	■	52					53	54	■
55					56	57								58
59				■	60					■	61			
62				■	63					■	■	64		

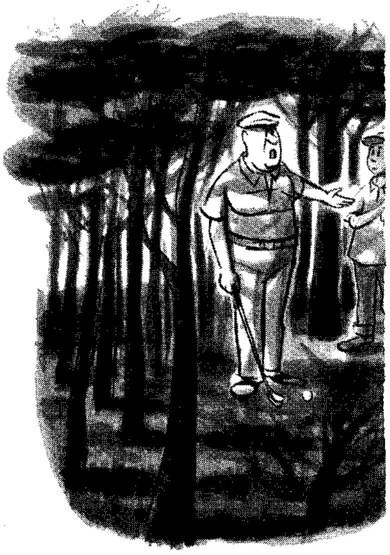

FRIENDLY LOAN CO.
WE NEVER SAY NO
O'BRIAN
10




COLD DRINKS
GeoBooth




MOM'S REAL HOME COOKING
37

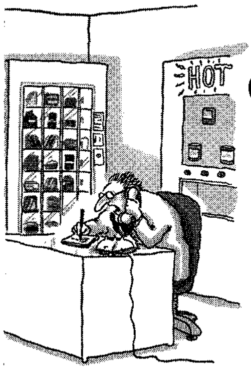


ACROSS

1. Sounds from cartoon readers, perhaps
4. Splinter groups
9. Freshly
13. First name in scat singing
15. Language that gives us "kiwi"
16. Novice
17. (See cartoon)
20. Aimed at the affluent
21. Rents out
22. Ingrid's "Notorious" co-star
23. Groan cause
25. Greetings from guard dogs
28. (See cartoon)
29. Letter opener
33. Potpourri bit
34. Boxers Max and Buddy
36. Wrigley field?
37. (See cartoon)
40. Bath suds
41. Is nosy
42. Monopoly purchase
43. Canterbury's county
45. Frivolous gal of song
46. Filmed a second time
47. Go _____ego trip
49. Easy win
50. Like a capt.'s charts
52. Makeshift bookmarks
55. (See cartoon)
59. "That wasn't supposed to happen!"
60. Perceive
61. Prepare for a match
62. Ready for picking
63. Pool competitions
64. Dirty digs

DOWN

1. This miss
2. Baseball's Moises
3. Trough fill
4. Dirty campaign tactics
5. Before dawn, perhaps
6. Secluded inlet
7. Prefix with angle or athlete
8. Attack command
9. Parthenon setting
10. (See cartoon)
11. Acts human
12. Misery
14. (See cartoon)
18. Seafood item
19. New Haven student
23. Jury makeup
24. Farming prefix
25. (See cartoon)
26. Writer Zora _____ Hurston
27. When some news airs
28. Tower setting
30. Jim Croce's "_____ Name"
31. Like some notebook paper
32. (See cartoon)
34. Tony winner Dennehy
35. Crafty sort
38. Bear overhead
39. (See cartoon)
44. (See cartoon)
46. Scoundrels
48. Utmost
49. Hen holder
50. Radar's pop
51. Looking down from
52. Unit of force
53. Workout count
54. Mattress support
55. Stole stuff?
56. Doctrine
57. Ball-bearing item
58. Make tempura



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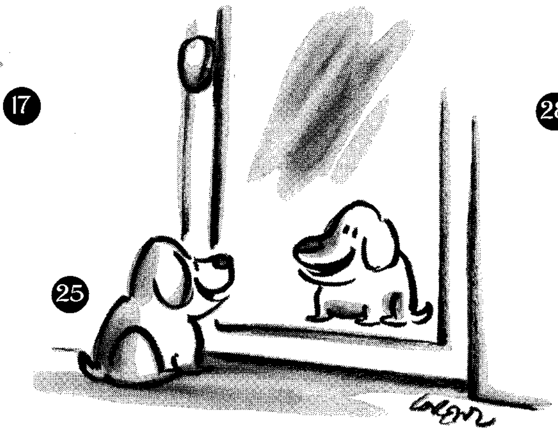

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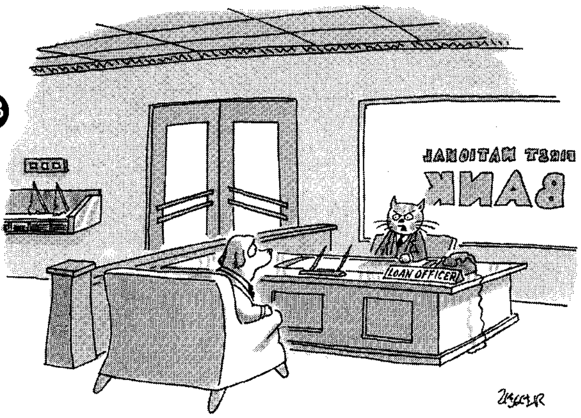

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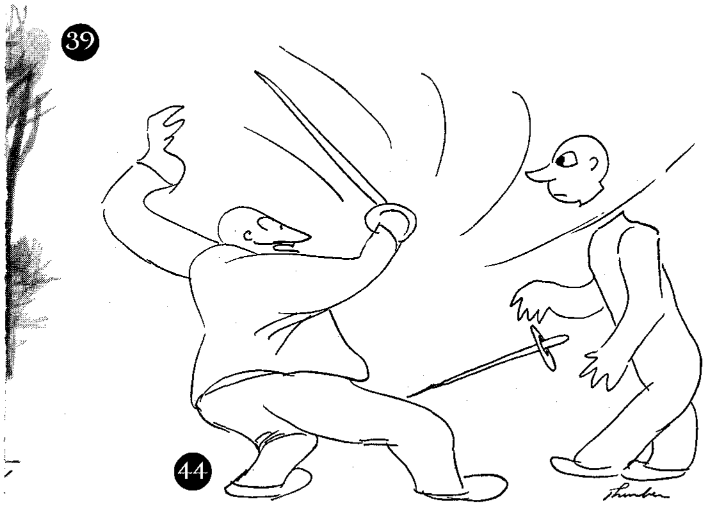

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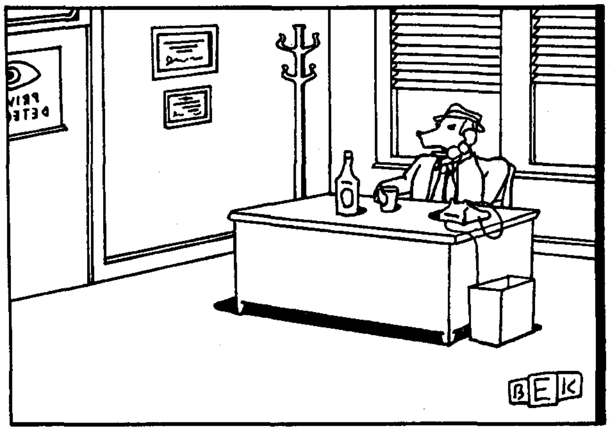

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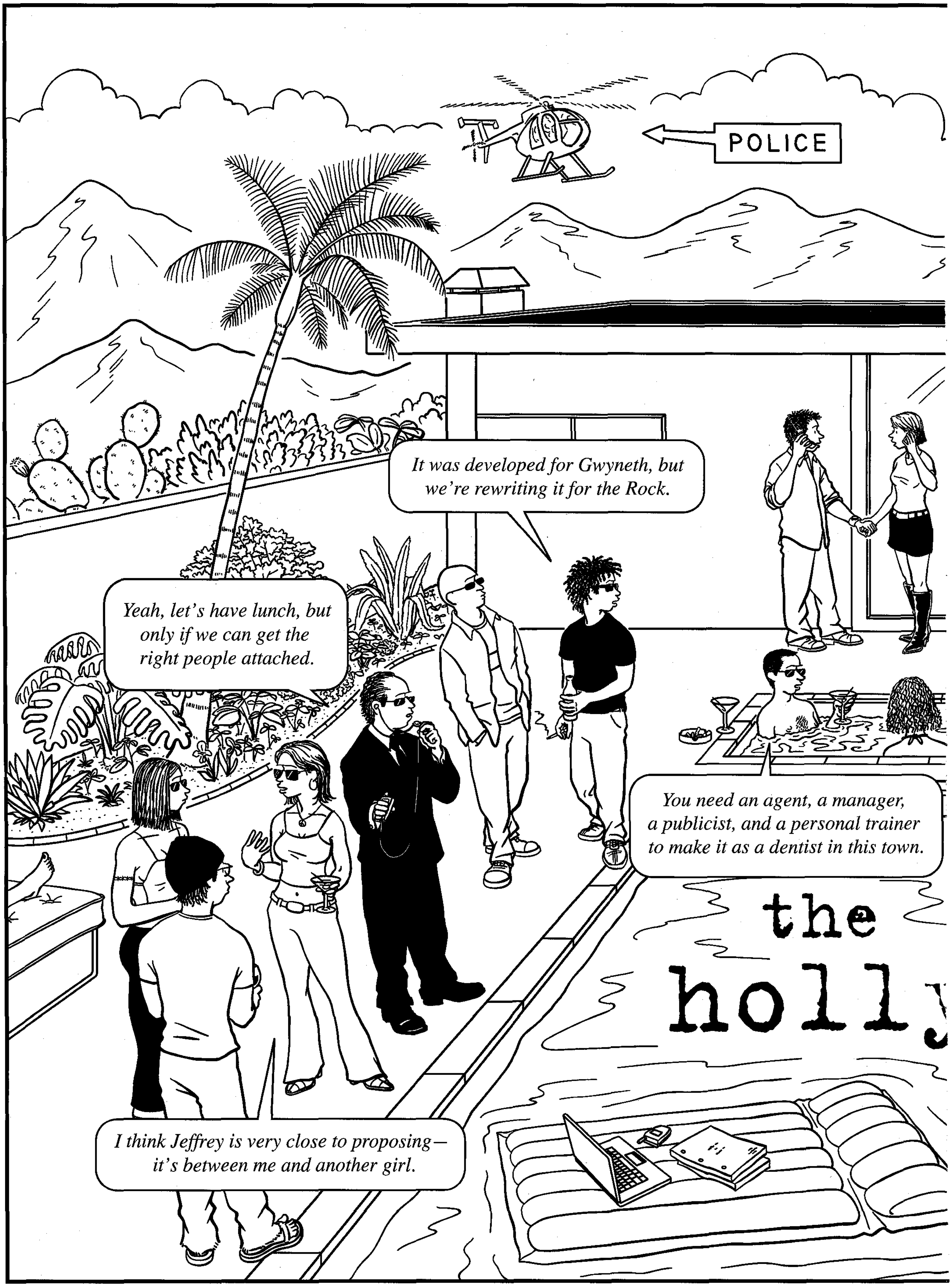
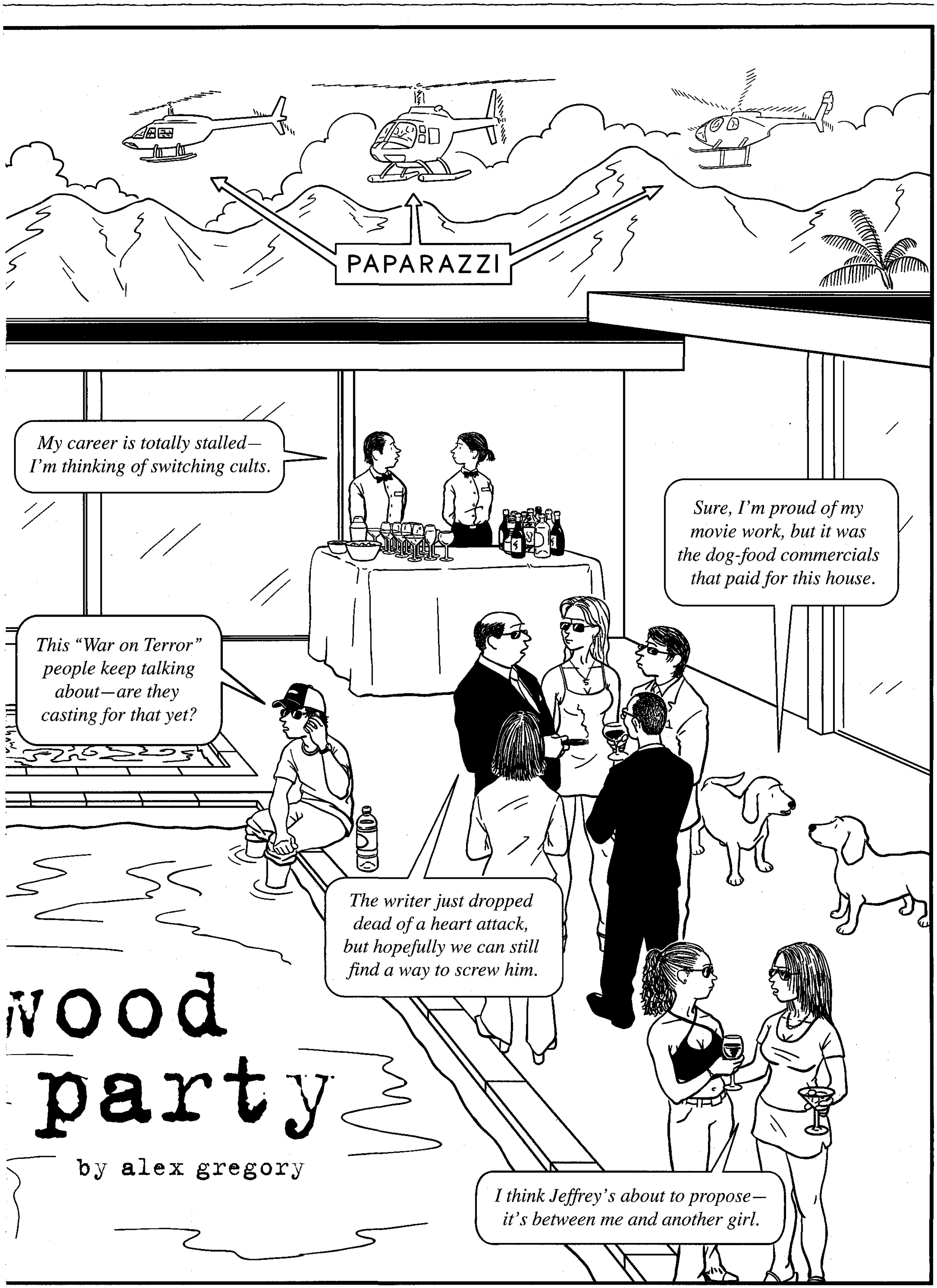
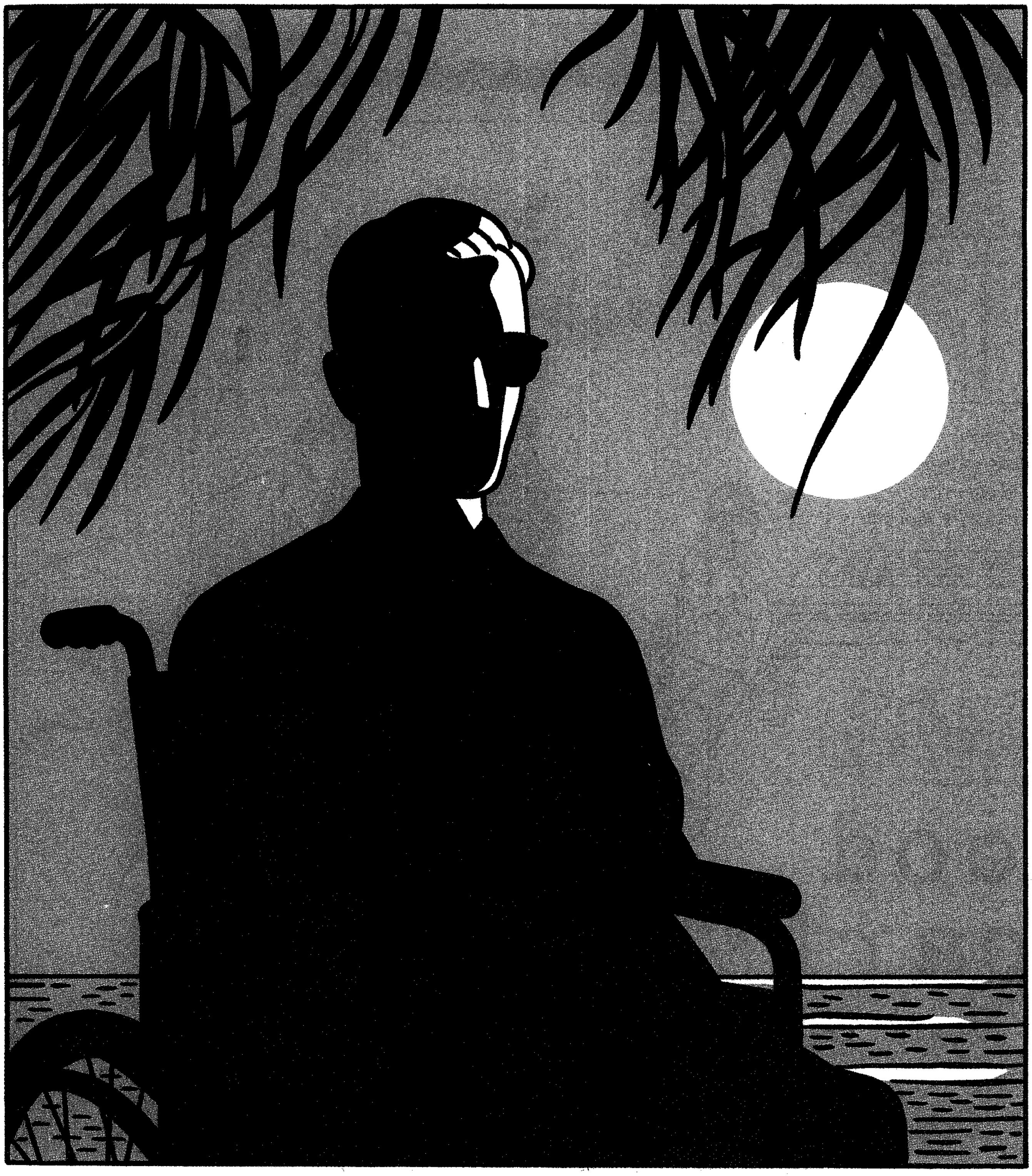

POLICE
It was developed for Gwyneth, but we're rewriting it for the Rock.
Yeah, let's have lunch, but only if we can get the right people attached.
You need an agent, a manager, a publicist, and a personal trainer to make it as a dentist in this town.
the
holl
I think Jeffrey is very close to proposing—it's between me and another girl.


PAPARAZZI
My career is totally stalled—I'm thinking of switching cults.
Sure, I'm proud of my movie work, but it was the dog-food commercials that paid for this house.
This "War on Terror" people keep talking about—are they casting for that yet?
The writer just dropped dead of a heart attack, but hopefully we can still find a way to screw him.
wood party
by alex gregory
I think Jeffrey's about to propose—it's between me and another girl.

FICTION

HUNTING KNIFE

BY HARUKI MURAKAMI



Two rafts were anchored offshore like twin islands. They were the perfect distance to swim to from the beach—exactly fifty strokes out to one of them, then thirty strokes from one to the other. About fourteen feet square, each raft had a metal ladder, and a carpet of artificial grass covering its surface. The water, ten or twelve feet deep at this point, was so transparent you could follow the chains attached to the rafts all the way down to the concrete anchors at the bottom. The swimming area was enclosed by a coral reef, and there were hardly any waves, so the rafts barely bobbed in the water. They seemed resigned to being anchored in that spot with the intense sun beating down on them day after day.

I liked to stand out there and look back at the shore, at the long white beach, the red lifeguard tower, the green row of palm trees—it was a gorgeous scene, maybe a little too picture-postcard perfect. Off to the right, the beach ended in a line of dark craggy rocks that led to the hotel cottages where my wife and I were staying. It was the end of June, still early in the tourist season, and there weren't many people at the hotel or on the beach.

There was an American military base nearby, and the rafts lay right in the flight path of the helicopters returning to it. The planes would appear offshore, bisect the space between the rafts, then zoom over the palm trees and disappear. They flew so low you could almost make out the expressions on the faces of the pilots. Still, except for those helicopters swooping overhead, the beach was a sleepy, quiet place—the perfect spot to be left alone on vacation.

Each cottage was a white two-story building divided into four units, two on the first floor, two on the second. Our room was on the first floor, with an ocean view. Right outside our window was a stand of white plumeria, and beyond that a garden with a neatly trimmed lawn. Morning and night, the sprinklers made a drowsy clatter on the grass. Past the garden was a swimming pool and a row of tall palm trees, whose huge fronds waved gently in the trade winds.

A mother and her son, Americans, were staying in the unit next door to my wife and me. They seemed to have settled in long before we arrived. The mother was about sixty, the son close to our age, twenty-eight or twenty-nine. They resembled each other more than any mother and son I'd ever seen—both with identical long, narrow faces, broad foreheads, tightly set lips. The mother was tall, her posture erect, her movements alert and brisk. The son seemed tall, too, but you couldn't really say for sure, as he was confined to a wheelchair. Invariably, his mother was behind him, pushing the chair.

They were incredibly quiet, their room like a museum. They never had the TV on, though twice I heard music coming from their place—a Mozart clarinet quintet the first time, the second time some orchestral music I didn't recognize. Richard Strauss was my guess. Other than that, no sound at all. They didn't use the air-conditioner—they left their front door open instead, so that the cool sea breeze could blow in. But, even with the door open, I never heard them talking. Any conversation they had—they had to talk sometime—must have been more or less an exchange of whispers. This seemed to rub off on my wife and me, and whenever we were in our room we found ourselves speaking in low voices.

We often ran across the mother and son in the restaurant, or in the lobby, or on one of the walkways through the garden. The hotel was a small, cozy place, so I guess we were bound to cross paths, whether we wanted to or not. We'd nod to one another as we passed. The mother and son had different ways of nodding hello. The mother would give a strong, affirmative nod; the son barely tilted his head. The impression that these two variant nods gave off, though, was pretty much the same: both greetings began and ended there; nothing lay beyond. We never tried to speak to them. My wife and I had more than enough to talk about between ourselves—whether we should move to a new apartment when we got home, what we should do about our jobs, whether or not to have kids. This was the last summer of our twenties.

After breakfast, the mother and son always sat in the lobby and read the newspapers—each methodically proceeding from one page to the next, top to bottom, as if they were locked in a fierce contest to see who could take longer to read the whole thing. Some days it wasn't newspapers but massive hardcover books. They seemed less like a mother and son than an old married couple who had long ago grown bored with each other.

At around ten every morning, my wife and I would take a cooler down to the beach. We'd cover ourselves with sunblock, then sprawl out on our mats on the sand. I'd listen to the Stones or Marvin Gaye on a Walkman, while my wife plowed through a paperback of "Gone with the Wind." She claimed that she'd learned a lot about life from that book. I'd never read it, so I had no idea what she meant. Every day, the sun would pop up inland, trace a slow path between the rafts—in the opposite direction from the helicopters—then sink leisurely beneath the horizon.

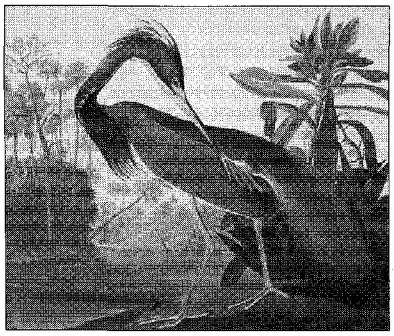
At two every afternoon, the mother and son would appear at the beach. The mother always wore a plain light-colored dress and a broad-brimmed white straw hat. The son never wore a hat; he had on sunglasses instead, with a Hawaiian shirt and cotton pants. They'd sit in the shade below the palm trees, the breeze rustling around them, and stare off at the ocean, not really doing anything. The mother sat in a folding beach chair, but the son never got out of his wheelchair. Every now and then, they'd shift slightly in order to stay in the shade. The mother had a silver thermos with her, and occasionally she poured herself a drink in a paper cup or munched on a cracker.

Some days they'd leave after half an hour; other days they stayed as long as three. When I went swimming, I could feel them watching me. It was quite a long way from the rafts to the line of palm trees, so I may have been imagining it. Or perhaps I was just being oversensitive, but whenever I clambered up onto one of the rafts I got the distinct feeling that their eyes were trained in my direction. Sometimes the silver thermos would glint like a knife in the sunlight.

One listless day followed another, with nothing to distinguish one from the next. You could have changed the order and no one would have noticed. The sun rose in the east, set in the west, the olive-green helicopters zoomed

FLOC'H

AUDUBON
and the Art of
NATURAL HISTORY



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in low, and I downed gallons of beer and swam to my heart's content.

On the afternoon of our last full day at the hotel, I went out for one final swim. My wife was taking a nap, so I left for the beach alone. It was a Saturday, and there were more people there than usual. Tanned young soldiers with buzz cuts and tattooed arms were playing volleyball. Kids were splashing around at the edge of the water, building sandcastles and shrieking in delight at each big wave. But there was almost no one in the water; the rafts were deserted. The sky was cloudless, the sun high overhead, the sand hot. It was after two, but the mother and son still hadn't made their appearance.

I walked out until the water came up to my chest, then did the crawl, heading for the raft on the left. Slowly, testing the resistance of the water with my palms, I swam on, counting the strokes. The water was chilly, and it felt good on my suntanned skin. Swimming in such clear water, I could see my own shadow on the sandy bottom, as if I were a bird gliding through the sky. After I had counted forty strokes, I looked up and, sure enough, there was the raft right ahead of me. Exactly ten strokes later, my left hand touched its side. I floated there for a minute, catching my breath, then grabbed hold of the ladder and scrambled aboard.

I was surprised to find someone else already there—an overweight blond woman. I hadn't seen anyone on the raft when I set out from the beach, so she must have got there while I was swimming toward it. The woman was wearing a tiny bikini—one of those fluttery red things, like the banners that Japanese farmers fly in their fields to warn that they've just sprayed chemicals—and she was lying face down. She was so obese that the swimsuit looked even smaller than it was. She seemed to have arrived recently—her skin was still pale, without a trace of a tan.

She glanced up for a second and then closed her eyes again. I sat down at the opposite end of the raft, dangled my legs in the water, and looked off at the shore. The mother and son still weren't under their palm trees. They were nowhere else, either. There was no way I could have missed them: the metal wheelchair, glistening in the sunlight, was a dead giveaway. I felt let down. Without them, a piece of the picture was missing. Perhaps they had checked out of the hotel and gone back to where they came from—wherever that was. But when I'd seen them earlier, in the hotel restaurant, I hadn't got the impression that they were preparing to leave. They had taken their time eating the daily special and had quietly drunk a cup of coffee afterward—the same routine as always.

I lay face down like the blond woman and tanned myself for ten minutes or so, listening to the tiny waves slap against the side of the raft. The drops of water in my ear warmed in the intense sun.

"Boy, it's hot," the woman said from the other end of the raft. She had a high-pitched, saccharine kind of voice.

"It sure is," I replied.

"Do you know what time it is?"

"I don't have a watch, but it must be around two-thirty. Two-forty, maybe?"

"Really?" she said, and let out something close to a sigh, as if that might not have been the time she was hoping for. Perhaps she just didn't care one way or another about the time.

She sat up. Sweat was beaded on her like flies on food. The rolls of fat started just below her ears and sloped gently down to her shoulders, then in one continuous series down her chubby arms. Even her wrists and ankles seemed to disappear into those fleshy folds. I couldn't help thinking of the Michelin Man. As heavy as she was, though, the woman didn't strike me as unhealthy. She wasn't bad-looking, either. She simply had too much meat on her bones. I guessed that she was in her late thirties.

"You must have been here awhile, you're so tanned," she said.

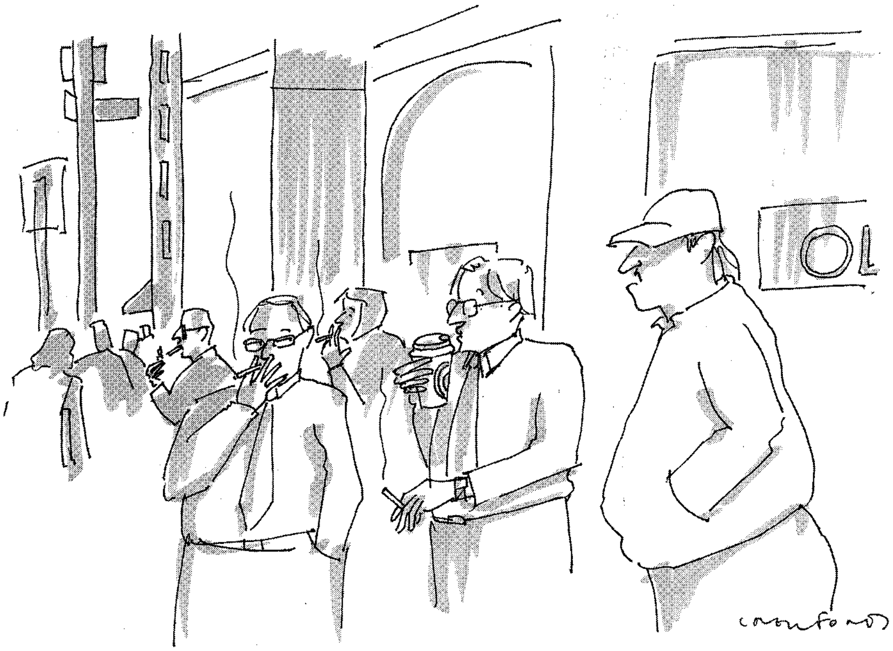
"Nine days."

"What an amazing tan," she said. Instead of responding, I cleared my throat. The water in my ears gurgled as I coughed.

"I'm staying at the military hotel," she said.

I knew the place. It was just down the road from the beach.

"My brother's a Navy officer, and he invited me to come. The Navy's not so bad, you know? The pay's O.K. They've got everything you want, right there on the base, plus perks like this resort. It was different when I was in college. That was during the Vietnam War. Having a



"Hey, buddy, can I bum a sip?"

• •

career military person in your family then was kind of an embarrassment. You had to slink around. But the world's really changed since then."

I nodded vaguely.

"My ex used to be in the Navy, too," she went on. "A fighter pilot. He had a tour of duty in Vietnam for two years, then he became a pilot for United. I was a stewardess for United then, and that's how we met. I'm trying to remember what year we got married. . . . Nineteen-seventy-something. Anyhow, about six years ago. It happens all the time."

"What does?"

"You know—airline crews work crazy hours, so they tend to date each other. The working hours and life style are totally off the wall. Anyhow, we get married, I quit my job, and then he takes up with another stewardess and winds up marrying her. That happens all the time, too."

I tried changing the subject. "Where do you live now?"

"Los Angeles," she said. "You ever been there?"

"No," I said.

"I was born there. Then my father was transferred to Salt Lake City. Have you been there?"

"No."

"I wouldn't recommend it," she said, shaking her head. She palmed the sweat from her face.

It was strange to think that she'd been a stewardess. I'd seen plenty of brawny stewardesses who could have been wrestlers. I'd seen some with beefy arms and downy upper lips. But I'd never seen one as big as her. Maybe United didn't care how heavy its stewardesses were. Or maybe she hadn't been this fat when she had that job.

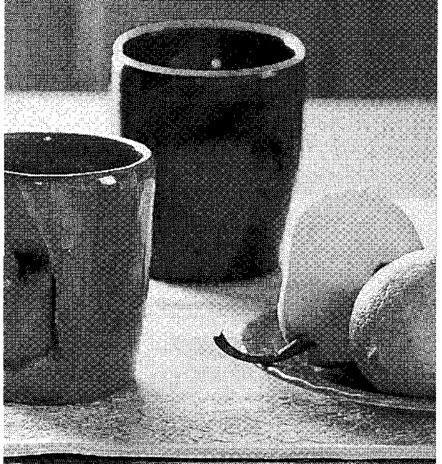
I scanned the beach. No sign yet of the mother and son. The soldiers were still tossing around a volleyball. The lifeguard up on his tower was staring intently at something with his oversized binoculars. Two military helicopters appeared offshore and, like messengers in a Greek tragedy delivering inauspicious news, they thundered solemnly overhead and disappeared inland. Silently, we watched the green machines vanish into the distance.

"I bet from up there we look like we're having a great time," the woman said. "Sunning ourselves out here on this raft, not a care in the world."

"You may be right."

"Most things look beautiful when you're way up high," she said. She rolled over onto her stomach again and closed her eyes.

Time passed in silence. Sensing that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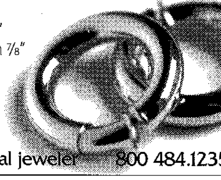
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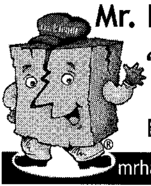
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it was the right moment to leave, I stood up and told her that I had to be getting back. I dived into the water and swam off. Halfway there, I stopped, treading water, and turned back toward the raft. She was watching me and waved. I gave a slight wave back. From far away, she looked like a dolphin. All she needed was a pair of flippers and she could leap back into the sea.

In my room, I took a nap, then as evening came on we went down to the restaurant as always and ate dinner. The mother and son weren't there. And when we walked back to our room from the restaurant their door was closed. Light filtered out through the small frosted-glass pane in the door, but I couldn't tell if the room was still occupied.

"I wonder if they've already checked out," I said to my wife. "They weren't at the beach or at dinner."

"Everyone checks out eventually," my wife said. "You can't live like this forever."

"I guess so," I agreed, but I wasn't convinced. I couldn't picture that mother and son anywhere but right there.

We started packing. Once we'd filled our suitcases and stowed them at the foot of the bed, the room suddenly seemed cold and alien. Our vacation was coming to an end.

I woke up and glanced at my watch, on the table next to the bed. It was one-twenty. My heart was beating furiously. I slid off the bed and down onto the carpet, sat cross-legged, and took some deep breaths. Then I held my breath, relaxed my shoulders, sat up straight, and tried to focus. A couple of repetitions of this and I was finally calm. I must have swum too much, I decided, or got too much sun. I stood and looked around the room. At the foot of the bed, our two suitcases crouched like stealthy animals. That's right, I remembered—tomorrow we won't be here anymore.

In the pale moonlight shining through the window, my wife was fast asleep. I couldn't hear her breathing at all, and it was almost as if she were dead. Sometimes she sleeps that way. When we first got married, it kind of scared me; every now and then, I thought maybe she really *was* dead. But it was just that si-

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lent, bottomless sleep. I stripped off my sweaty pajamas and changed into a clean shirt and pair of shorts. Shoving a miniature bottle of Wild Turkey that was on the table into my pocket, I opened the door quietly and went outside. The night air was chilly and it carried with it the damp odor of all the surrounding plants. The moon was full, bathing the world in a strange hue that you never see in the daytime. It was like looking through a special color filter, one that made some things more colorful than they really are and left others as drab and drained as a corpse.

I wasn't sleepy at all. It was as if sleep had never existed, my mind was so totally clear and focussed. Silence reigned. No wind, no insects, no night birds calling out. Only the far-off sound of waves, and I had to listen carefully to hear even them.

I made one slow circuit of the cottage, then cut across the grass. In the moonlight, the lawn, which was circular, looked like an iced-over pond. I stepped softly, trying not to crack the ice. Beyond the lawn was a narrow set of stone steps, and at the top a bar decorated in a tropical theme. Every evening, just before dinner, I had a vodka-tonic at this bar. This late at night, of course, the place was closed, the bar shuttered, and the parasols at each table all neatly folded up like slumbering pterodactyls.

The young man in the wheelchair was there, resting an elbow on one of the tables, gazing out at the water. From a distance, his metal wheelchair in the moonlight looked like some precision instrument made especially for the deepest, darkest hours of the night.

I had never seen him alone before. In my mind, he and his mother were always a single unit—him in his chair, his mother pushing it. It felt odd—rude, even—to see him like this. He was wearing an orange Hawaiian shirt I'd seen before and white cotton pants. He was just sitting without moving, staring at the ocean.

I stood for a while, wondering whether I should signal to him that I was there. But, before I could decide what to do, he sensed my presence and turned around. When he saw me, he gave his usual minimalist nod.

"Good evening," I said.

"Good evening," he answered in a small voice. This was the first time I'd heard him speak. His voice sounded a little sleepy but otherwise perfectly normal. Not too high, not too low.

"A midnight stroll?" he asked.

"I couldn't sleep," I said.

He looked me over from top to bottom, and a faint smile came to his lips. "Same here," he said. "Have a seat, if you'd like."

I hesitated for a moment, then walked over to his table. I pulled out one of the plastic chairs and sat down opposite him. I turned to look in the same direction that he was looking. At the end of the beach were the jagged rocks, like muffins sliced in half, with waves slapping at them at regular intervals. Neat, graceful little waves—as if they'd been measured off with a ruler. Beyond that, there wasn't much to look at.

"I didn't see you at the beach today," I said.

"I was resting in my room all day," the young man replied. "My mother wasn't feeling well."

"I'm sorry to hear that."

"It's not a physical thing. More of an emotional, nervous condition." He rubbed his cheek with the middle finger of his right hand. Despite the late hour, his cheeks were as smooth as porcelain, not a trace of stubble. "She's O.K. now. She's sound asleep. It's different from my legs—one good night's sleep and she's better. Not completely cured or anything, but at least she's her usual self again. Come morning, she'll be fine."

He was silent for thirty seconds, maybe a minute. I uncrossed my legs under the table and wondered if this was the right moment to leave. It was as if my whole life revolved around trying to judge the right point in a conversation to say goodbye. But I missed my chance; just as I was about to tell him I had to go, he spoke up.

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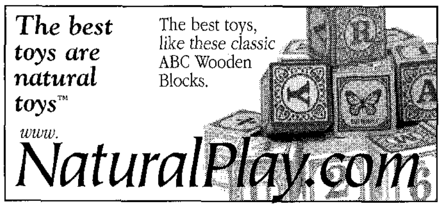

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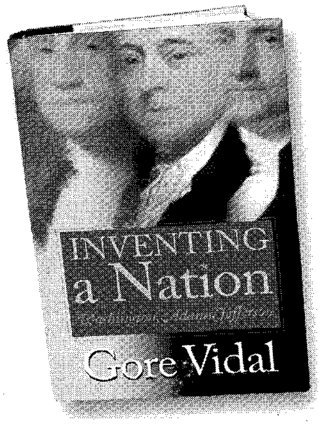

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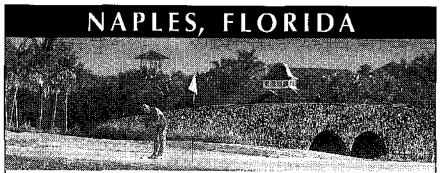

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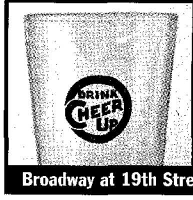

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ders. Even if they have the same cause, there are a million different symptoms. It's like an earthquake—the underlying energy is the same, but, depending on where it happens, the results are different. In one case, an island sinks; in another, a brand-new island is formed."

He yawned. A long, formal kind of yawn. Elegant, almost. "Excuse me," he said. He looked exhausted, his eyes were blurry, as if he might fall asleep at any second. I glanced at my watch and realized that I wasn't wearing one—just a band of white skin on my wrist where my watch had been.

"Don't worry about me," he said. "I might look sleepy but I'm not. Four hours a night is enough for me, and I usually get that just before dawn. So at this time of night I'm mostly here, just hanging out."

He picked up the Cinzano ashtray on the table, gazed at it for a while as if it were some rare find, then put it back.

"Whenever my mother has her nervous condition, the left side of her face gets frozen. She can't move her eye or her mouth. If you look at that side of her face, it looks like a cracked vase. It's weird, but it's not fatal or anything. One night's sleep and she's good to go."

I had no idea how to respond, so I just gave a noncommittal nod. A cracked vase?

"Don't tell my mother I told you about this, O.K.? She hates it if anybody talks about her condition."

"Sure," I said. "Besides, we're leaving tomorrow, so I doubt I'll have a chance to talk with her."

"That's too bad," he said, as if he really meant it.

"It is, but I've got to get back to work, so what can I do?" I said.

"Where are you from?"

"Tokyo."

"*Tokyo*," he repeated. He narrowed his eyes again and stared out at the ocean, as if he'd be able, if he stared hard enough, to see the lights of Tokyo out beyond the horizon.

"Are you going to be here much longer?" I asked.

"Hard to say," he said, tracing the handgrip on his wheelchair with his fingers. "Another month, maybe two. It all depends. My sister's huband owns stock in this hotel, so we can stay here for next to nothing. My father runs a

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big tile company in Cleveland, and my brother-in-law's basically taken it over. I don't like the guy very much, but I guess you can't choose your family, can you? I don't know, maybe he's not as terrible as I make out. Unhealthy people like me tend to be a little narrow-minded." He took a handkerchief from his pocket and slowly, delicately, blew his nose, then repocketed the handkerchief. "Anyhow, he owns stock in a lot of companies. A lot of investment property, too. A shrewd guy, just like my father. So we're all—my family, I mean—divided into two types of people: the healthy ones and the sick ones. The functional and the dysfunctional. The healthy ones are busy making tile, increasing their wealth, and evading taxes—don't tell anybody I said that, O.K.?—and they take care of the sick ones. It's a neat division of labor."

He stopped speaking and took a deep breath. He tapped his fingernails against the tabletop for a while. I was silent, waiting for him to go on.

"They decide everything for us. Tell us to stay a month here, a month there. We're like the rain, my mother and I. We rain here, and the next thing you know we're raining somewhere else."

The waves lapped at the rocks, leaving white foam behind; by the time the foam vanished, new waves had appeared. I watched this process vacantly. The moonlight cast irregular shadows among the rocks.

"Of course, since it's a division of labor," he went on, "my mother and I have our roles to play, too. It's a two-way street. It's hard to describe, but I think we complement their excesses by doing nothing. That's our raison d'être. Do you know what I mean?"

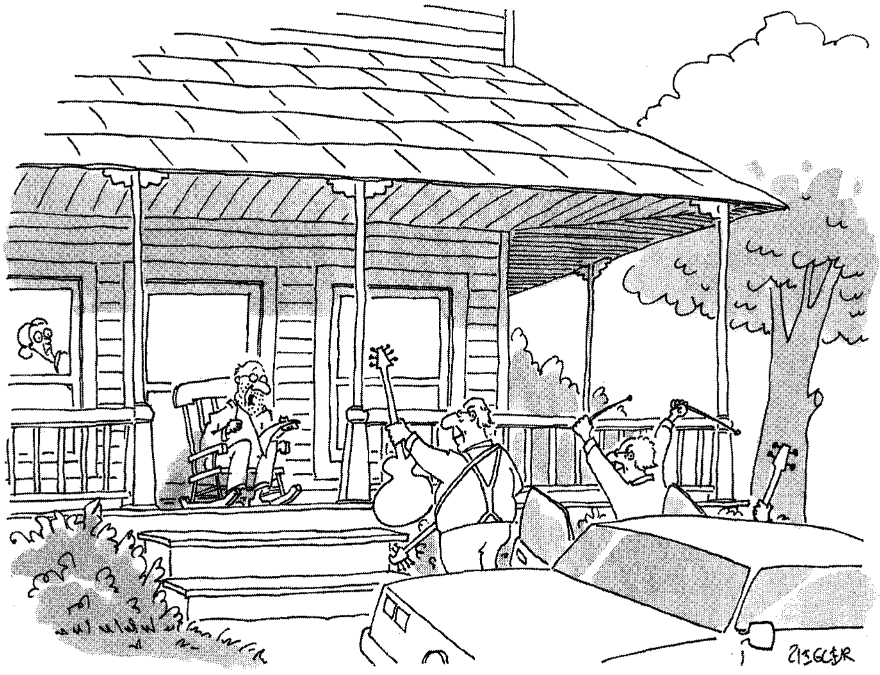
"Yeah, sort of," I replied. "But I'm not entirely sure I do."

He laughed quietly. "A family's a strange thing," he said. "A family has to exist as its own premise, or else the system won't function. In that sense, my useless legs are a kind of banner that my family rallies around. My dead legs are the pivot around which things revolve."

He was tapping the tabletop again. Not in irritation—merely moving his fingers and quietly contemplating things in his own time zone.

"One of the main characteristics of this system is that lack gravitates toward greater lack, excess toward greater excess. When Debussy was getting nowhere with an opera he was composing, he put it this way: 'I spent my days pursuing the nothingness—*rien*—it creates.' *My* job is to create that void, that *rien*."

He sank back into an insomniac silence, his mind wandering to some distant region. Perhaps to the void inside



"Oh, hell, Artie. Not another farewell tour."

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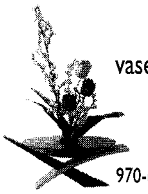

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him. Eventually, his attention returned to the here and now, the point he came back to a few degrees out of alignment with where he'd departed from. I tried rubbing my own cheek. The scratch of stubble told me that, yes, time was still moving. I took the miniature bottle of whiskey from my pocket and stood it on the table.

"Care for a drink? I don't have a glass, I'm afraid."

He shook his head. "Thanks, but I don't drink. I'm not sure how I'd react if I did, so I don't. But I don't mind other people drinking—be my guest."

I tipped the bottle back and let the whiskey slide slowly down my throat. I closed my eyes, savoring the warmth. He watched this process from across the table.

"This might be a strange question," he said, "but do you know anything about knives?"

"Knives?"

"Knives. You know, like hunting knives."

I'd used knives when camping, I told him, but I didn't know much about them. That seemed to disappoint him. But not for long.

"Never mind," he said. "I just happen to have a knife I wanted you to take a look at. I bought it about a month ago from a catalogue. But I don't know the first thing about knives. I don't know if it's any good or if I wasted my money. So I wanted to have somebody else take a look and tell me what they think. If you don't mind."

"No, I don't mind," I told him.

Gingerly, he withdrew a five-inch-long, beautifully curved object from his pocket and placed it on the table.

"Don't worry. I'm not planning to hurt anybody with it, or hurt myself. It's just that one day I felt like I had to own a sharp knife. I can't remember why. I was just dying to get a knife, that's all. So I looked through some catalogues and ordered one. Nobody knows that I'm always carrying this knife around with me—not even my mother. You're the only person who knows."

"And I'm leaving for Tokyo tomorrow."

"That's right," he said, and smiled. He picked up the knife and let it rest in his palm for a moment, testing its weight as if it held some great significance. Then he passed it to me across the table. The knife did have a strange heft—it was as if I were holding a living creature with a will of its own. Wood inlay was set into the brass handle, and the metal was cool, even though it had been in his pocket all this time.

"Go ahead and open the blade."

I pushed a depression on the upper part of the hilt and flipped out the heavy blade. Fully extended, it was about three inches long. With the blade out, the knife felt even heavier. It wasn't just the weight that struck me; it was the way the knife fit perfectly in my palm. I tried swinging it around a couple of times, up and down, side to side, and with that perfect balance I never had to grip harder to keep it from slipping. The steel blade, with its sharply etched blood groove, carved out a crisp arc as I slashed with it.

"Like I said, I don't know much about knives," I told him, "but this is one great knife. It's got such a great feel to it."

"But isn't it kind of small for a hunting knife?"

"I don't know," I said. "I guess it depends on what you use it for."

"True enough," he said, and nodded a few times as if to convince himself.

I folded the blade into the handle and handed it back to him. The young man opened it up again and deftly twirled the knife once in his hand. Then, as if he were sighting down a rifle, he shut one eye and aimed the knife directly at the full moon. Moonlight reflected off the blade and for an instant flashed on the side of his face.

"I wonder if you could do me a favor," he said. "Could you cut something with it?"

"Cut something? Like what?"

"Anything. Whatever's around. I just want you to cut something. I'm stuck in this chair, so there isn't much I can reach. I'd really like it if you'd cut something up for me."

I couldn't think of any reason to refuse, so I picked up the knife and took a couple of stabs at the trunk of a nearby palm tree. I sliced down diagonally, lopping off the bark. Then I picked up one of those Styrofoam kickboards lying near the pool and sliced it in half lengthwise. The knife was even sharper than I'd imagined.

"This knife's fantastic," I said.

"It's handcrafted," the young man said. "And pretty expensive, too."

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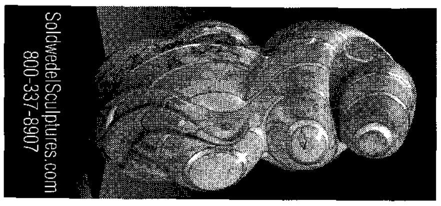
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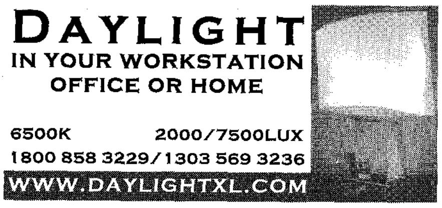
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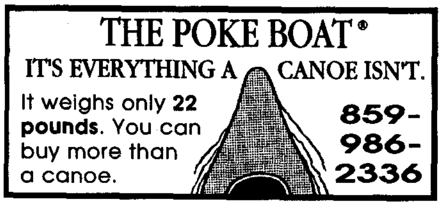
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I aimed the knife at the moon as he'd done, and stared hard at it. In the light, it looked like the stem of some ferocious plant just breaking through the surface of the soil. Something that connected nothingness and excess.

"Cut some more things," he urged.

I slashed out at everything I could lay my hands on. At coconuts that had fallen on the ground, the massive leaves of a tropical plant, the menu posted at the entrance to the bar. I even hacked away at pieces of driftwood on the beach. When I ran out of things to cut, I started moving slowly, deliberately, as if I were doing Tai Chi, silently slicing the knife through the night air. Nothing stood in my way. The night was deep, and time was pliable. The light of the full moon only added to that depth, that pliancy.

As I stabbed the air, I suddenly thought of the fat woman, the ex-United Airlines stewardess. I could see her pale, bloated flesh hovering in the air around me, formless, like mist. Everything was there inside that mist. The rafts, the sea, the sky, the helicopters, the pilots. I tried slashing them in two, but the perspective was off, and it all stayed just out of reach of the tip of my blade. Was it all an illusion? Or was *I* the illusion? Maybe it didn't matter. Come tomorrow, I wouldn't be here anymore.

"Sometimes I have this dream," the young man in the wheelchair said. His voice had a strange echo to it, as if it were rising up from the bottom of a cavernous hole. "There's a sharp knife stabbed into the soft part of my head, where the memories are. It's stuck deep down inside. It doesn't hurt or weigh me down—it's just stuck there. And I'm standing off to one side, looking at this like it's happening to someone else. I want someone to pull the knife out, but no one knows that it's stuck inside my head. I think about yanking it out myself, but I can't reach my hands inside my head. It's the strangest thing. I can stab myself, but I can't reach the knife to pull it out. And then everything starts to disappear. I start to fade away, too. And only the knife is left. Only the knife is always there—to the very end. Like the bone of some prehistoric animal on the beach. That's the kind of dream I have," he said. ♦

(*Translated, from the Japanese, by Philip Gabriel.*)

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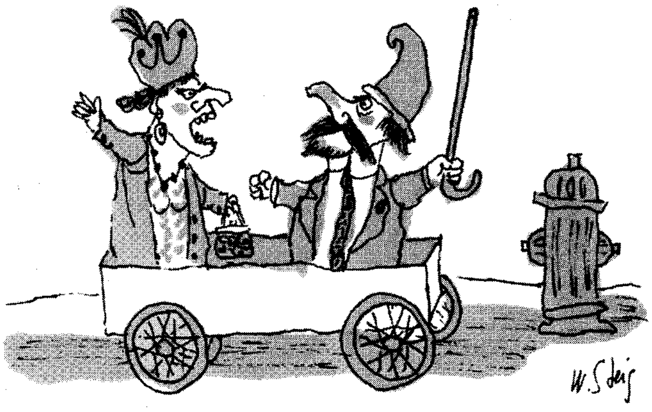


BOOKS

ARSE POETICA

When Rimbaud was good, he was very, very good.

BY RUTH FRANKLIN

What poet's life lends itself better to myth than Arthur Rimbaud's? By the age of sixteen, he had written one of the most celebrated poems in French literature. Soon he was shocking bohemian Paris, living on absinthe and hashish and openly having an affair with Paul Verlaine. He wrote his masterpiece, "Une Saison en Enfer" ("A Season in Hell"), in a few months' fevered productivity but supposedly cast almost all the printed copies into the flames. (When the allegedly burned books were discovered in the publisher's archives a decade after Rimbaud's death, the poet's literary executor asked that they be destroyed in order to "give the appearance of truth" to the legend.) In the years that followed, Rimbaud wandered the globe, working odd jobs from circus cashier to African gunrunner. But he never wrote another word.

Normally, a poet's work proves a useful antidote to the mythologizing tendency, but the material that Rimbaud left behind is both limited and ambiguous. His complete works—fewer than a hundred short poems, the seven-thousand-word prose text "Une Saison en Enfer," and the prose poems known as the Illuminations, as well as approximately two hundred and fifty letters and a handful of other texts—barely fill two volumes. The poetry ranges from inspired to truly puerile; many of the letters contain outright lies, while others are fragmented or of dubious authenticity. Secondary sources present additional problems: the memoirs of Rimbaud's relatives, friends, and ex-friends are a cacophony of quarrels, often apocryphal, while critics have tended to use him as a mirror for their own preoccupations. In the words of the biographer Graham Robb, he has been resurrected as "Symbolist, Surrealist, Beat poet, student revolutionary, rock lyricist, gay pioneer, and inspired drug-user," and invoked by artists from Picasso to Jim Morrison. Yet the crucial questions about Rimbaud's life and work remain unanswered: How could he write poetry like this at such a young age? And why did he give it up?

The past few years have seen a proliferation of works that strive to give a fuller treatment of Rimbaud. In addition to Robb's biography—the most exhaustive study published in English in more than fifty years—there is now the Modern Library's "Rimbaud Complete," translated and edited by Wyatt Mason. The bilingual first volume, which was published last year, includes all of Rimbaud's poetry as well as uncollected writings ranging from Latin school compositions to fragments of poems reconstructed by his acquaintances. This is now joined by "I Promise to Be Good: The Letters of Arthur Rimbaud," the largest sampling of the poet's correspondence yet to appear in English. In his introduction to this second volume, Mason argues that the letters act as a corrective, serving to "muddle the sexy myth by clarifying the sober man." They may clarify all too much. Not only do the letters reveal that Rimbaud could often be obnoxious and demanding; worse, they show that after he stopped writing poetry he apparently never gave it another thought. Camus once wrote, "To sustain the legend, one has to be unaware of these decisive letters," and concluded that "they are sacrilege, as the truth sometimes is."

The legend begins at the moment of Rimbaud's birth on October 20, 1854, in the small town of Charleville. Some say he was born with his eyes open, as a sign of the seer that he would become; others claim that the future traveller surprised the midwife by crawling toward the door. As a child, Rimbaud showed little interest in the usual boyhood pursuits, but his school compositions earned him a reputation for genius. Entering a regional poetry contest at the age of fifteen, he slept through the first three hours, then he had breakfast brought to him, and, handing in his poem as time was called, won the competition.

Rimbaud's first few surviving letters date from about this time. From the start, they demonstrate the peculiar mixture of peremptoriness and ingratiation that would characterize his relationships throughout his life. Even on a scribbled note to his teacher Georges Izambard, Rimbaud's flair for the dramatic is apparent, his handwriting full of swirls and flourishes. Writing a few months later to the poet Théodore de Banville, the editor of the anthology "Le Parnasse Contemporain," he is both self-deprecating and infatuated with his own promise. "Cher Maître," he wrote, "Try to keep a straight face while reading my poems: You would make me ridiculously happy and hopeful were you, Maître, to see if a little room were found for [them] among the Parnassians. . . . Ambition! Such madness!"

Enclosed were three samples of the fifteen-year-old's latest work, among them "Sensation":

> Through blue summer nights I will pass
> along paths,
> Pricked by wheat, trampling short grass:
> Dreaming, I will feel coolness underfoot,
> Will let breezes bathe my bare head.
>
> Not a word, not a thought:

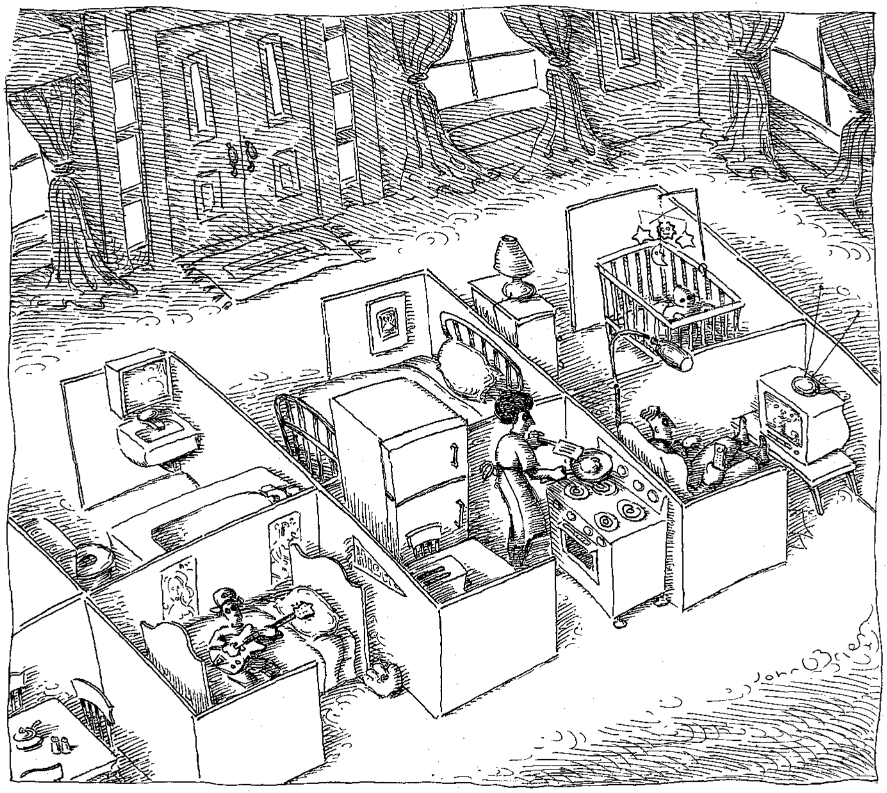
WILLIAM STEIG, 5/24/82; OPPOSITE: PHILIPPE PETIT-ROULET

Rimbaud's letters confound as well as clarify: How could a great poet abandon his vocation without so much as a backward glance?

> Boundless love will surge through my
> soul,
> And I will wander far away, a vagabond
> In Nature—as happily as with a woman.

Like Monet's "Impression: Sunrise," the painting that launched the Impressionist movement just a few years later, this miniature lyric distills the works of its antecedents in an altogether original way. The use of "blue" to describe the summer nights (an early draft had the more conventional "fine") looks ahead to the surrealist Rimbaud of the next few years; the lines that follow, with their emphasis on what the speaker feels rather than on what he sees, submerge the clichés of the Parnassians' nature poetry in an ecstasy of sensuality.

In May, 1871, Rimbaud wrote the two letters that have come to be known as the "Lettres du Voyant" ("Seer Letters")—the only explicit statements of his poetic credo. The first, addressed to Izambard, begins by insulting the teacher's "dry-as-dust subjective poetry" and includes a singsong ditty that crudely depicts anal intercourse. "Right now, I'm encrapulating myself as much as possible," the sixteen-year-old wrote. (Mason here substitutes a cognate for Rimbaud's coinage "*je m'encrapule*," which actually makes the poet sound overly scatological; others have translated it as "making myself scummy" or "lousing myself up.") "Why? I want to be a poet, and I'm working to turn myself into a *seer*. . . . It has to do with making your way toward the unknown by a *derangement of all the senses*. . . . I is someone else" ("*Je est un autre*"). The second letter, sent to Izambard's friend Paul Demeny, repeats and elaborates on the soon-to-be-famous pronouncement. "The first task of any man who would be a poet is to know himself completely; he seeks his soul, inspects it, tests it, learns it," Rimbaud wrote. "The Poet makes himself into a *seer* by a long, involved, and logical *derangement of all the senses*. Every kind of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself; he exhausts every possible poison so that only essence remains." Much has been made of the fact that Rimbaud added the qualifiers "long, involved, and logical" to this second call for the "derangement of all the senses," nudging at the doors of perception rather than battering them down. But the sense is much



the same: Rimbaud intends to turn his psyche inside out, to undergo whatever spiritual, emotional, and physical tests he can devise. "*Je*" becomes "*un autre*" by deconstructing what it means to be "*Je*."

Rimbaud could not manage this on his own. In September, 1871, he again sought a patron, writing to Paul Verlaine, whose poetry he knew and admired, with a sampling of his latest work. "Come, dear great soul," Verlaine wrote back. "We await you; we desire you." Rimbaud's train fare to Paris was enclosed.

The twenty-seven-year-old Verlaine was an alcoholic, a "dilettante homosexual" (as one Rimbaud biographer calls him), and a violent man who repeatedly assaulted his pregnant bride, Mathilde. The introduction of Rimbaud into the household caused additional strain, and Verlaine was forced to find lodging for him among friends. Rimbaud's odd behavior (one of his hosts discovered him naked on the rooftop, hurling his clothes onto the street) and horrific personal hygiene earned him a reputation as a difficult house guest. At a gathering of the group of poets known as the *Vilains Bonshommes* (Nasty Fellows), he interrupted one poet's reading by yelling "*Merde!*" at the end of every line, and stabbed another with a small sword. But, even as Verlaine's friends were appalled by these pranks, copies of the extraordinary "Le Bateau Ivre" ("The Drunken Boat"), soon to become Rimbaud's most famous poem, were circulating among them. "Unless this is one of fate's nasty little tricks, we are witnessing the birth of a genius," one of the Nasty Fellows commented.

"Le Bateau Ivre" begins, somewhat abruptly, in the voice of the boat. (Banville's suggestion that Rimbaud should have started more conventionally, with a simile—"I am like a drunken boat"—drew a scornful response.) Its crew killed by "yawping Redskins," it is free to wander the seas on its own: "Sweeter than sour apples are to infants / Were the green waters my pine hull drank." Few geographic features mark the boat's course; instead, its journey is described solely in images: "the low sun stained with mystic horror," "green nights ablaze with snow," "blue and yellow heavings of phosphorescent song!" The boat begins to disintegrate, and the visions grow darker: "solar lichen and gobs / Of azure snot," "a lunatic plank escorted by black seahorses." Finally, with a triumphant cry—"Let my hull burst! Let me sink into the sea!"—the boat breaks up:

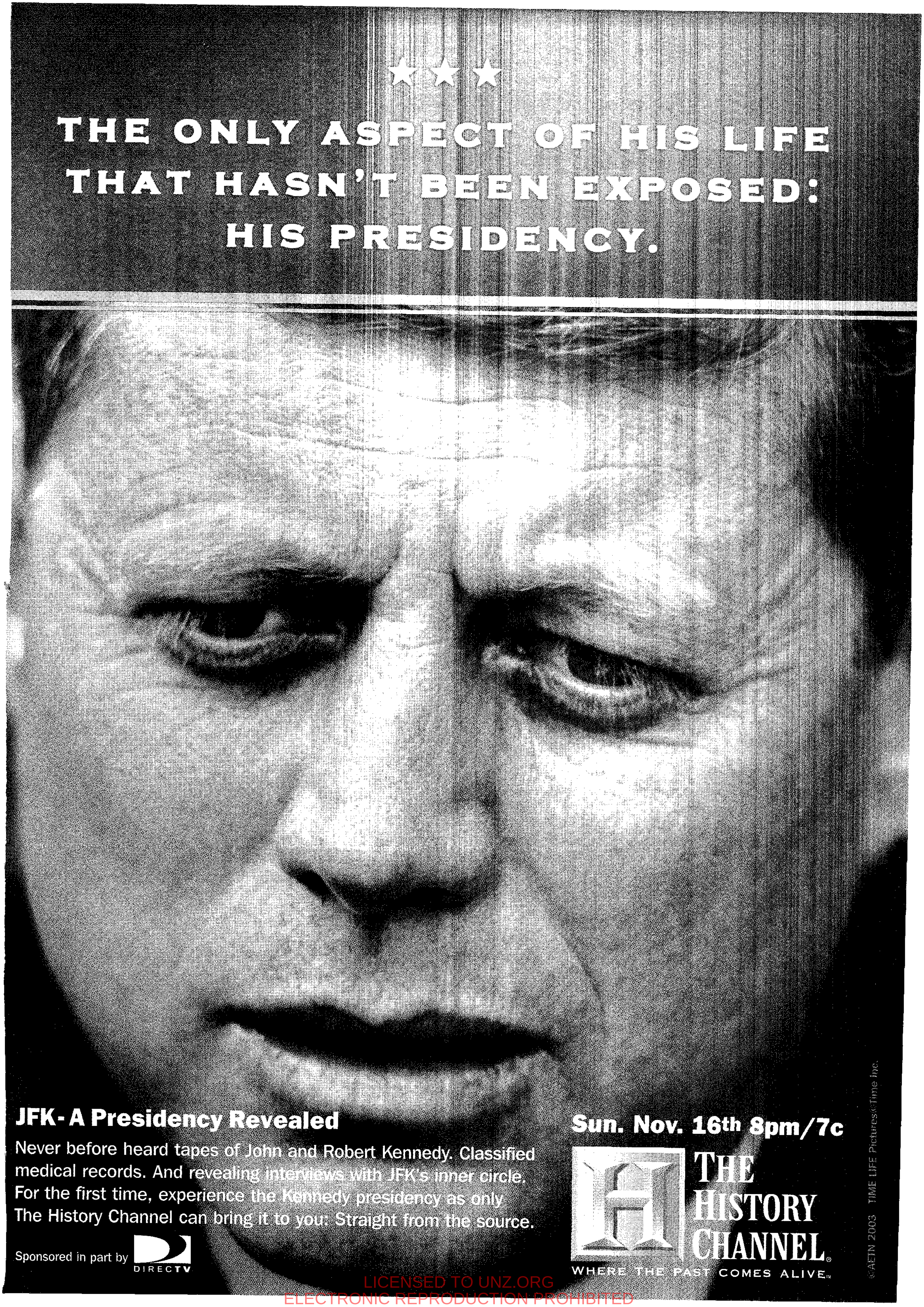
Bathed in your weary waves, I can no
    longer ride
In the wake of cargo ships of cotton,
Nor cross the pride of flags and flames,
Nor swim beneath the killing stares of
    prison ships.

This poem has been interpreted as everything from a pre-Freudian expression of the poet's longing for his absent father to a chronicle of drug-induced hallucinations. What can't be debated is Rimbaud's musical ear for the assonances and long, open vowels of French. He famously celebrated these sounds in the sonnet "Voyelles" ("Vowels"), which, influenced by contemporary theories about synesthesia, assigns a color to each one: "Black A, White E, Red I, Green U, Blue O."

Anyone who knows Rimbaud's work only from anthologies will be quite surprised to learn what else he was writing in Paris, especially once he installed himself among the group of artists known as the Zutistes (from "*zut*," meaning "damn"). His contributions to the group's communal journal are mainly parodies of other poets, including one co-written with Verlaine titled "Sonnet to an Asshole": "Dark and wrinkled like a violet carnation / It breathes, humbly lurking in moss." Rimbaud may have written one of the most melodious and visionary poems in the language, but he also had a wicked gift for obscene pastiche.

In the summer of 1872, Verlaine and Rimbaud ran away together for the first time, inaugurating a tumultuous series of meetings and partings. This first idyll lasted only a few weeks before Verlaine returned to his wife, but by September they were together again, this time in London. They walked around the city, read at the British Museum, and placed newspaper ads seeking work as tutors: "Leçons de Français, Latin, Littérature, en français, par deux Gentlemen Parisiens." Rimbaud probably wrote much of the Illuminations in London, and during a visit home he began "Une Saison en Enfer."

Both works are written in prose—mainly—but otherwise very little connects them. "Une Saison en Enfer" is narrated in a highly dramatic voice that takes on multiple personas. It presents itself as a confessional account of the speaker's sojourn among the condemned, but the story it tells is deliberately cryptic. "Dear Satan," the narrator exhorts early on, "you

★ ★ ★

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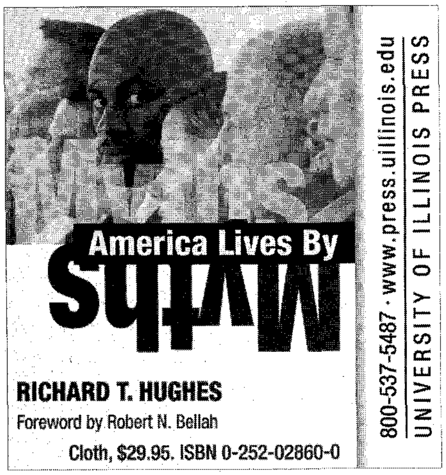
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who so delight in a writer's inability to describe or inform—watch me tear a few terrible leaves from my book of the damned." Given Rimbaud's later years in Africa, it can be tempting to find the seeds of his wanderlust in the many references to journeys. "My day is done: I'm leaving Europe," the speaker announces at one point. "The marine air will burn my lungs; unknown climates will tan my skin." More popular, but almost as preposterous, is the reading of "Une Saison en Enfer" as a demonic diary of Rimbaud's relationship with Verlaine. This interpretation rests largely on the section called "Foolish Virgin." "He was very nearly a child," this character (presumably Verlaine) says of the Hellish Husband. "His mysterious ways seduced me. . . . He's doubtless a demon, *for he is certainly not a man*." Finally, the poem has been read as Rimbaud's renunciation of poetry, even though some of the Illuminations postdate it. In the section titled "Alchemy of the Word," Rimbaud presents a version of his poetic manifesto. "I invented colors for vowels!" the speaker exults. "I regulated the shape and movement of every consonant, and . . . flattered myself with the belief that I had invented a poetic language that, one day or another, would be understood by everyone, and that I alone would translate." By the end of the poem, though, it seems clear that Rimbaud is rejecting love, not writing. "Why was I seeking a friendly hand? I have an advantage now: I can laugh off truthless loves, and strike down duplicitous couples with shame . . . and now I'll be able to *possess truth in a single body and soul*." This is a hymn to a new self-sufficiency, but Rimbaud himself did not yet seem to know what he would do with it.

The Illuminations, a grouping of some forty prose poems on subjects ranging from a circus sideshow to city life, overlap chronologically with "Une Saison en Enfer"; most of them were probably written between 1872 and 1874, though possibly later. Within the space of only a few years, Rimbaud had moved from the exquisite patterning of "Sensation" and "Le Bateau Ivre" to this far looser, more imagistic form. Some of the poems seem vaguely descriptive of Rimbaud's time in London, but the collection resists an overarching framework even more strenuously than does "Une Saison en Enfer." They are united only by their style: a series of images as tactile as they are visionary—"seraphic centauresses," "harvested flowers as big as guns and goblets," "a Baghdad boulevard where groups were singing joyously"—and often summed up by an oracular last line. "What will become of the world when you leave? No matter what happens, no trace of you now will remain."

The relationship between the two poets ended in chaos. One of the few surviving letters from Rimbaud to Verlaine (much of their correspondence was destroyed by Mathilde), dated July 4, 1873, reveals an unusually abject Rimbaud alone in London; Verlaine has returned once more to his wife. "Come back, come back, dear friend, only friend, come back. I promise to be good," the letter opens, and ends, "My life is yours." Verlaine responded with a telegram summoning Rimbaud to Brussels. They quarrelled for a few days, and then Verlaine went out, bought a gun, and returned drunk. When Rimbaud said he intended to return to Paris, Verlaine shot him in the arm. Verlaine was arrested and subjected to a humiliating examination at the hands of the police doctors, who stated in their report that his body showed "traces of habitual pederasty." He was sentenced to two years in prison. Rimbaud saw him only once more, in early 1875, after Verlaine's conversion to Christianity. "Verlaine arrived here the other day, clutching a rosary," Rimbaud wrote to a friend. "Three hours later he had renounced his god and reopened the 98 wounds of Our Savior."

The next six years of Rimbaud's life are only sketchily documented. He was back in London in 1874, and spent part of the year working as a tutor elsewhere in England. In Stuttgart, the following February, he gave Verlaine a copy of the Illuminations, intending him to pass them on to a mutual friend to have them printed. His peregrinations took him as far as Indonesia, in 1876, as a recruit in the Dutch Colonial Army, which he deserted two weeks after his arrival. Robb tentatively dates one of the Illuminations to this period, but perhaps only because it sounds so like a farewell to poetry:

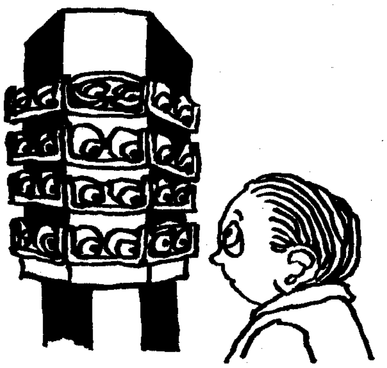
> For sale: living places and leaving places, sports, extravaganzas and creature comforts, and all the noise, movement, and hope they foment!
> For sale: mathematical certainties and astonishing harmonic leaps. Unimaginable discoveries and terminologies—available now.

He circled around Europe several more times, picking up languages (at one point he was teaching himself Russian from a Greek-Russian dictionary). An extraordinary letter describes his ascent of the Alps in a straight narrative of a kind not seen either during his poetic period or during the time he spent in Africa:

> The road, which is never wider than six meters, is filled the whole way with nearly two meters of fallen snow, which, at any moment, might collapse, covering you with a meter-thick blanket you have to hack through during a hailstorm. And then: no more shadows above, below, or beside, despite being surrounded by these massive things; no more road, or precipices, or gorges or sky: just whiteness out of a dream, to touch, to see or not to see.

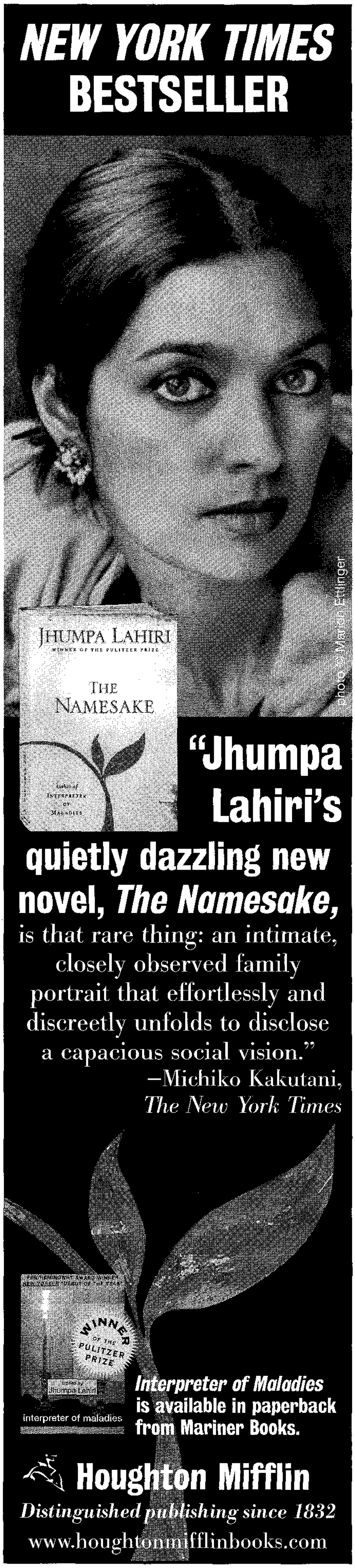
In December, 1878, Rimbaud found work in Cyprus as a quarry supervisor. His first letter from Cyprus, in February, gives evidence of the isolation that would mark the rest of his life: "The nearest village is one hour away on foot. There is nothing here but a jumble of rocks, a river, and the sea. There are no houses. No soil, no gardens, no trees." One could add: no poetry. This is as literary as Rimbaud will ever allow himself to be from now on. By May of 1880, he had a new job supervising the construction of a palace for the governor-general, but a few months later he reported to his family that he had left Cyprus "after disagreements with the paymaster and my engineer." At best, this was a half-truth. Ottorino Rosa, who became friendly with Rimbaud in Africa, reported that he "had the misfortune, when throwing a stone, to strike a native worker on the temple, killing him instantly." Rosa implies that it was an accident, but, if so, why did Rimbaud flee so quickly and so furtively?

"Shall I offer you African chants? Houri dances? Shall I disappear?" the narrator of "Une Saison en Enfer" asks. The accomplished Arabist that Rimbaud would become might have been amused by his teen-age dreams of the exotic, but the last part, at least, was right. When his poetry began to resurface in France in the eighteen-eighties (thanks to Verlaine, who made renewed efforts to publish it), he had vanished so completely that he was often referred to as "the late Arthur Rimbaud."



Rimbaud arrived in Aden in August, 1880, and almost immediately found work in the office of Alfred Bardey, a coffee trader. He seems to have had a talent for business. "I have the complete confidence of my employer," he wrote to his family. During the next eleven years, he travelled back and forth between Aden and East Africa, establishing a base for the company at Harar, in Abyssinia, and from there leading treks farther into the interior. The majority of his letters from these years—there are more than a hundred and fifty in all—were sent to his mother and sister, Isabelle, whom he addressed formally as "Dear Friends." Requests for books, scientific instruments, or other favors are the common theme. His demands were endless: at one point he wanted a special gun for elephant hunting; later his mother spent a small fortune on photographic equipment. The sheer volume of this correspondence, which often included specific instructions on how the materials were to be sent, gives some sense of how maddeningly difficult his often contradictory orders must have been to accommodate. At one point, his mother apparently refused to continue supplying him. "This is not the way to help a man who is thousands of leagues away from home, travelling among savage peoples and without a single correspondent where he resides," Rimbaud responded angrily. "If I can't even ask my family for favors, who the hell am I supposed to go to?" He then requested a few more books.

Rimbaud's life in Africa was not as bleak as this rather self-pitying tone suggests. Charles Nicholl's engaging account of those years, "Somebody Else: Arthur Rimbaud in Africa, 1880-1891," reveals that he was remembered vividly by a number of friends as a charming conversationalist and a scrupulously honest businessman who immersed himself in the culture of the region. During his time in Harar, he lived with a local woman for a year and a half, and he also had a servant



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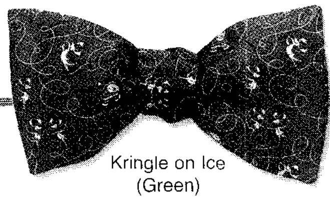

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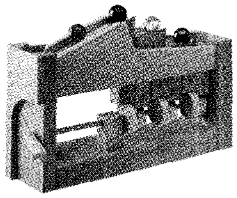

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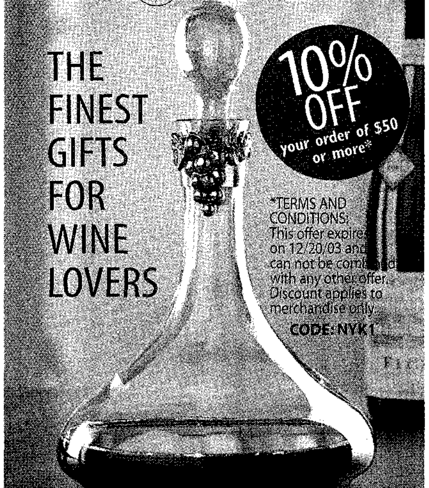

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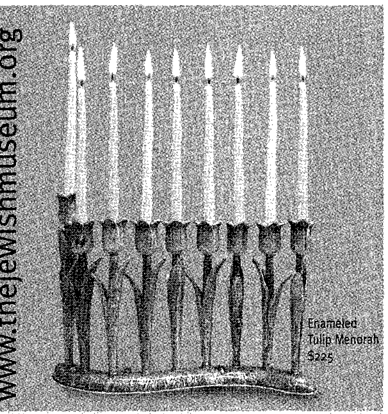

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of whom he was sufficiently fond to make the only beneficiary of his will. There are numerous testimonials to his learned discussions of the Koran and to his deep interest in Muslim cultures. (Rimbaud used a seal stamped "Abdoh Rinbo," which, as Abdoh is an abbreviation of Abdullah, means that Rimbaud was calling himself "Rimbaud the servant of Allah.") Nor was he "without a single correspondent." Mason has chosen to exclude from his edition more than thirty letters that Rimbaud sent to Alfred Ilg, a Swiss trader, arguing that these letters are of interest mainly for the information they contain about Rimbaud's business dealings. But the excerpts that others have published show that the frequent contact—thirty-three letters in a few years is a lot, considering the circumstances—led to a warm relationship between the two men, and that even these business letters were marked by Rimbaud's humor and keen descriptive powers.

The central professional event of Rimbaud's African career was an expedition that he led to bring arms to King Menelik of Choa, in the heart of Abyssinia. Stymied by various obstacles, including the death of two men whom he had lined up as his partners, Rimbaud spent a year organizing the caravan, which finally departed in the fall of 1886. It was a disaster. Throughout the four-month journey, Rimbaud was beset by men who claimed that Pierre Labatut, one of Rimbaud's would-be partners, had died owing them money. When he finally reached Menelik, the King seized the merchandise and forced him to liquidate the caravan at a ruinously low price. This setback seems to have thoroughly disillusioned Rimbaud. "I am bored all the time," he wrote to his family in 1888. "And if that weren't bad enough, there's the matter of living without one's family, without intellectual pursuits, lost in the midst of all these Negroes whose lives one is trying to improve and who, themselves, are trying to take advantage of you and make it impossible for you to sell your wares without delays." His mother had continually pressured him to get married, to which he normally replied that he didn't have time to look for a wife. But in August, 1890, his tone changed abruptly. "Could I get married at your house next spring?" he asked her. "But I wouldn't be able to stay there, nor abandon my work here. Do you think I could find someone who would be willing to follow me in my travels?"

He may already have sensed that his travels were nearing an end. In February, 1891, back in Harar, he was troubled by a pain in his right knee that rapidly worsened; he asked his mother to send stockings to treat varicose veins, but when they arrived his leg was too swollen for him to put them on. By the time he realized that it would be necessary to return to Aden for treatment, he could no longer walk. A crew of sixteen servants carried him on a litter for the nightmarish eleven-day journey to the coast, which he documented in a tersely written diary. (A sample entry: "Porters proceed badly. At 9:30 stop in Arrouina. Throw me to the ground on arrival. I impose a 4 thaler fine.") From Aden, he sailed to Marseille, where he learned that he had cancer. On May 22, 1891, he telegrammed his mother, "Today, you or Isabelle, come to Marseille by express train. Monday morning they amputate my leg. Risk of death. Serious matters to settle." The surgery seems only to have increased his suffering. He died in Marseille six months later.

Are the Africa letters actually "sacrilege," as Camus believed? Certainly, they do not paint a complimentary portrait of Rimbaud, revealing an almost completely unreflective and mercantile—in a word, prosaic—man. Critics have tended to dismiss the second phase of his life, to pretend that Rimbaud in Africa was literally "someone else." No real poet, they worry, could have abandoned his art without so much as a glance back.

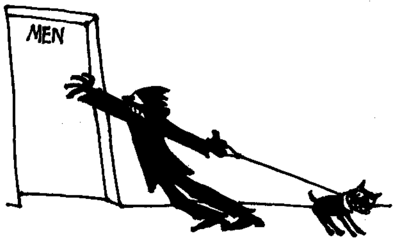
But the more difficult question that Rimbaud's life raises is what to make of an artist whose career ends before he reaches maturity. It is disconcerting that a teen-ager should have created the fantastic visions of "Le Bateau Ivre," the surrealism of "Voyelles," the imagery of the Illuminations—and then dispensed with poetry altogether. The life of the artist should be the most compelling bildungsroman of all; the portrait of an artist as a young man implies that he has already grown older. The Nasty Fellows thought they had been summoned to the birth of a genius, but what they actually witnessed was the death of one. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Humor

The Pythons: Autobiography, *by The Pythons (Thomas Dunne; $60).* Eric Idle recalls that when publishers approached Monty Python to do their first book, in the nineteen-seventies, "nobody was very interested." Little seems to have changed, and this book was put together by Bob McCabe, a film critic, who interviewed the Pythons about life before, during, and after the TV show. The result could easily have felt warmed over, but in fact it's consistently absorbing. The principals have obviously told their story too many times to bother with concealment, and are disarmingly frank about their frequent disagreements and rows. Accompanying the text are hundreds of photographs, including many unfamiliar ones from private collections—backstage shots and shots of school plays, cricket teams, and university revues. Such is the legacy of the show that the pictures of the Pythons' schools and touchingly ordinary-seeming parents look as if they had come out of Monty Python sketches.

Caesar's Hours, *by Sid Caesar with Eddy Friedfeld (PublicAffairs; $26).* More than twenty years ago, Caesar delivered a memoir ("Where Have I Been?") that detailed his rise to comic stardom in the fifties and the addiction to alcohol and tranquillizers that obliterated the next two decades. This volume revisits much of the same material, but with greater focus on the sources of Caesar's style—for instance, he learned his trademark "double-talk," a stream of nonsense sounding plausibly like a foreign language, from listening to the immigrant clientele at his father's luncheonette. Some of his influences are more predictable than others. He admires the way Chaplin and Keaton worked "both sides of the street," playing humor off against pathos. Caesar was a professional saxophone player before he moved into comedy, and he feels that that skill "was integral to my performing."



Hitchhiker, *by M. J. Simpson (Justin, Charles; $27.95).* Douglas Adams, the author of the satiric sci-fi classic "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy," emerges in this biography as an epic procrastinator who, at the time of his death, in 2001, when he was forty-nine, had been working (or not) on his final novel for nearly a decade. A lover of Apple computers and left-handed guitars, Adams began his career writing radio shows for the BBC, and episodes of his life read like comedy sketches; he once put off work on a novel by producing a script for a documentary about his inability to finish a novel. Simpson scrupulously uncovers Adams's inspirations, from "Doctor Who" to a pretentious college roommate who wrote "awful poetry about swans," and, in homage to his subject, he divides the book into forty-two chapters—a number that "Hitchhiker" devotees will recognize as Adams's answer to the meaning of "life, the universe, and everything."

The Speakeasies of 1932, *by Gordon Kahn and Al Hirschfeld (Glenn Young; $32.95).* Originally published in 1932 under the rather coy title "Manhattan Oases," Hirschfeld and Kahn's book memorializes three dozen of some thirty-two thousand illegal drinking holes that sprang up in New York during Prohibition, ranging from the Mansion, where "admission is by a unique, wooden card only," to the Bowery dive O'Leary's. In Hirschfeld's caricatures of the barmen behind their bars, his dynamic line is less exuberant than in later years and has a muted quality appropriate to the Depression. The text, co-written by Kahn, a journalist and screenwriter whose career was later destroyed by the blacklist, includes a specialty of each house—gin daisy, horse's neck, brandy flip, prairie-oyster cocktail, and so on. A preface, written by Hirschfeld shortly before his death, in January, insists that he and Kahn tried every single one: "This may be the best damned researched book ever."

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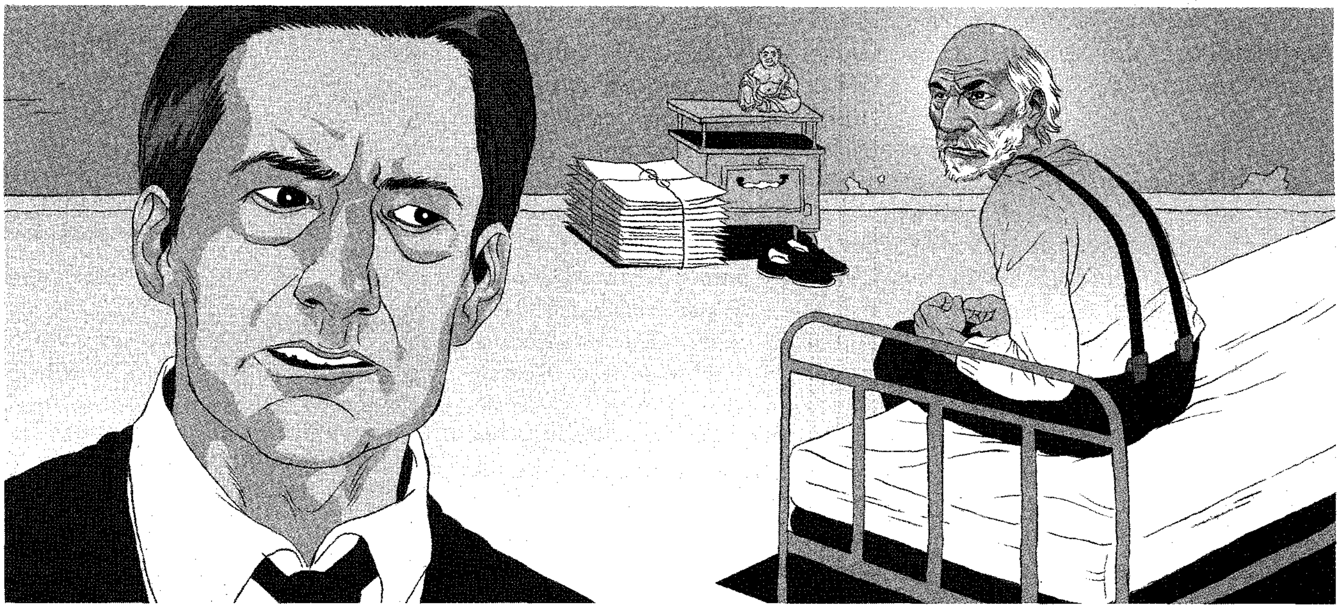
THE THEATRE

SONS AND LOVERS

Love triangles by Harold Pinter and Richard Greenberg.

BY HILTON ALS

Mick (Aidan Gillen) has a body like a switchblade—always ready to spring into action and respond to violence with violence. In a leather jacket as black as his brilliantined hair, Mick is a neat, presentable sociopath. When the world around him is still, his face goes slack and his hands hang at his sides. He doesn't know what to do with himself without conflict—his aphrodisiac. The year: 1960. Mick and his brother, Aston (Kyle MacLachlan), live in a house in West London, sharing a room that's a kind of junk heap, filled with paint buckets and chandeliers and dusty rugs—signs of domesticity gone awry. Aston, unlike Mick, doesn't cultivate violence. Instead, he moves with the slow deliberateness of someone who fully intends to put his affairs in order; it's just that he can't keep up with all the things that need doing—he's too busy watching the dust motes circle.



Pinter on paternity: Kyle MacLachlan and Patrick Stewart as surrogate father and son in "The Caretaker."

TOMER HANUKA

By all outward appearances, the brothers in Harold Pinter's mysterious and moving early play "The Caretaker" (a Roundabout Theatre Company production, at the American Airlines) seem orphaned, spiritually and otherwise. Then Aston introduces a third figure into this menagerie of fraternal brutality and apathy: an old drifter called Davies (Patrick Stewart). At the beginning of the play, Aston invites Davies in for a "sit down":

> DAVIES: Sit down? Huh . . . I haven't had a good sit down . . . I haven't had a proper sit down . . . well, I couldn't tell you. . . . Ten minutes off for tea-break in the middle of the night in that place and I couldn't find a seat, not one. All them Greeks had it, Poles, Greeks, Blacks, the lot of them, all them aliens had it.

What those "aliens" had isn't quite clear, but never mind. Aston takes Davies's endless rambling as a matter of course: people speak to him and he listens, although he's never entirely sure what language, let alone conversation, is meant to produce. A connection? An exchange of ideas? Of hope?

He offers Davies a place to sleep, and the next morning, after he has gone out, Mick appears and pins the groggy old man to the floor. "I hope you slept well last night," he says, taunting him. Mick is turned on by the vulnerability of his prey, but he has no interest in doing permanent damage to Davies. After all, if he killed him, he'd be fatherless again. For what "The Caretaker" is about—what the title implies—is the arrival of Daddy, the man who protects and instructs and serves as a role model for his boys. It's as if Aston and Mick had been waiting for Davies all their lives. When Aston asks him to stay on as the building's caretaker, he's handing the old man the keys to their souls, inviting him to mend the cracked minds and howling hearts of his adopted children.

No other contemporary playwright has explored the nasty ways in which fathers and sons construct each other—and then smash the models—with such vibrancy and intellectual perspicacity. "The Caretaker" was Pinter's fourth full-length play to be staged. (He was twenty-nine when it was first produced, in London in 1960.) With it, he established himself as a powerful force in the British theatre. He offered an alternative to the kitchen-sink drama, which critics and audiences had come to accept as the only version of reality. (One of the many props here, in a fantastic set by John Lee Beatty, is an unused and cumbersome kitchen sink.) Pinter's work was, instead, an exploration of the nightmare landscape of the mind—the mind that lies to itself about what is real and tries to reshape the world around it. Pinter described the inner life of the colonialist without an empire.

Pinter wrote his early plays while touring the provinces as an actor. Attuned to the absurd and absurdist tales

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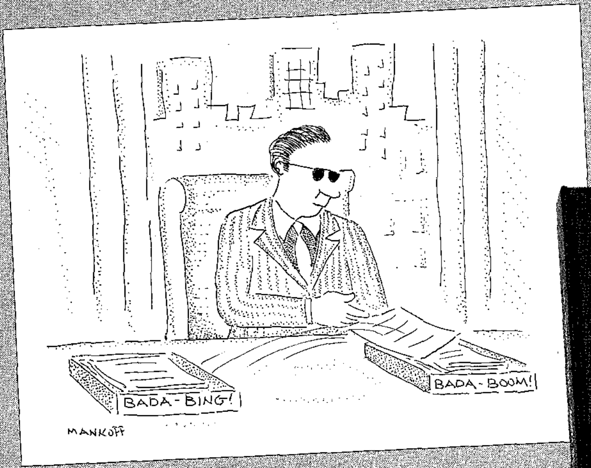
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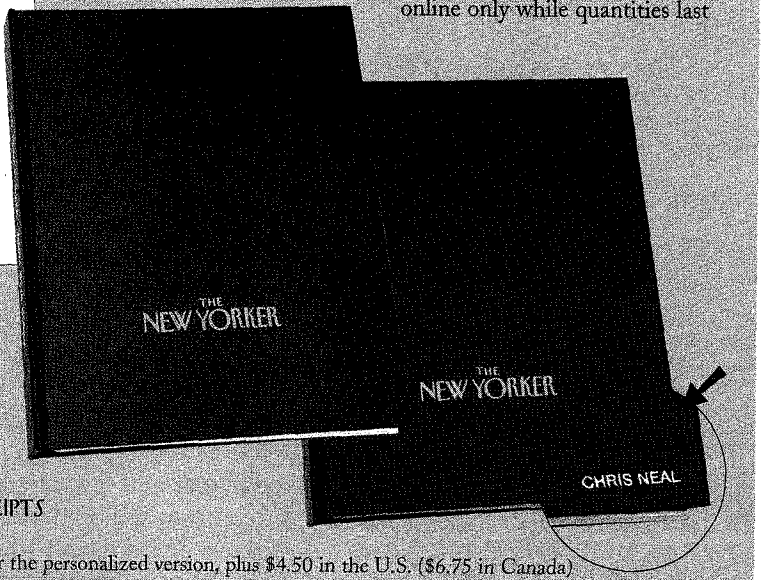
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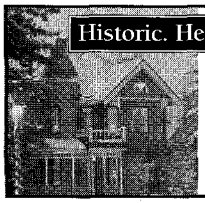

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he picked up on the road—the emotional connections missed in a shabby teahouse; the dank wooden stairs that creak under the weight of the suspicious landlady as she eyes life through her tenants' keyholes—he later incorporated these memories into his work, adding to them his genius for delineating the political without becoming ideological. Structurally, he borrowed from Beckett, whose prose the younger playwright admired without reservation. Rather than setting up a dramatic pretense (murder, mayhem), Pinter revelled in his characters' horrifying and horrifyingly funny swipes at one another's consciousness.

Sometimes, he made the violence palpably real, as he did with Mick, whose itchy trigger finger keeps us on edge. It is difficult to imagine any other young actor playing Mick as beautifully as Gillen does. Reminiscent of the young Gary Oldman, he is almost embarrassingly intense. He gives everything and more, and it's impossible to look away. Toward the end of the play, when Davies dons a velvet smoking jacket, we see Mick lying at his feet like a boy listening to a bedtime story; he's both lethal and adorable, a cuddly gutter rat. Stewart and MacLachlan perform well under David Jones's sensitive direction, but it's Gillen who brings his own imagination to bear on the show. Pinter's quintessentially British plays—with their ellipses, their swift changes in perspective, the yearning hidden beneath their characters' idiosyncratic forms of defensiveness—are not easy for American theatregoers. On the night I saw "The Caretaker," the audience occasionally seemed bewildered, and I could sense Stewart and MacLachlan trying to reassure them. Gillen, instead, hit us with the full blast of his character's menace, wit, and madness. In doing so, he opened our ears, our eyes, our hearts, without compromise.

Robert Sean Leonard has the clean-cut good looks of an unremarkable businessman. He's the guy in the gray flannel suit on the commuter train, who went from college to marriage and on to paternity without a hitch. Responsibility is his middle name. But it's his lightly worn officiousness that makes him attractive. You want to unbutton his suit and unleash the passion behind his starched shirt. In a number of plays, ranging from Tom Stoppard's "The Invention of Love" to Eugene O'Neill's "Long Day's Journey Into Night," Leonard has played a kind of boy-man; awkward at expressing desire, he needs someone who's emotionally immodest to force him into the act of love.

In Richard Greenberg's "The Violet Hour" (at the Biltmore), Leonard plays John Pace Seavering (his name is pure, monogrammed privilege), a young New York publisher who has yet to publish his first book. Fresh out of college, Seavering has only enough money to put out one volume, and he must choose between two manuscripts: one by his lover, a black diva called Jessie Brewster (Robin Miles), and one by a former classmate and possible love interest, Denis McCleary (the lyrical Scott Foley). The play is set just after the First World War, and one gets the sense that Seavering's suggested bisexuality—which was certainly not in vogue then—is a matter less of nature than of necessity: like all good editors, he makes himself available to the talent.

Greenberg, who also wrote the immensely popular "Take Me Out," has composed a play that has more to do with ideas than it does with characters. Among other things, "The Violet Hour" examines the manufacturing of illusion, the commodification of the theatre, and writers who reinvent the truth in order to suit their emotional state. It is commendable that Greenberg wants to cram so many thoughts into the play, but it makes the plot difficult to follow. "The Violet Hour" has been staged with valor by Evan Yionoulis, and Christopher Barreca's inventive set and Donald Holder's clever lighting design do what they can to allay the confusion. Robin Miles, however, does not help the production. Her Jessie is imperious when she needs to be sly, simpering and coquettish when she needs to be fierce and calculating. To be fair, Miles stepped into the role on short notice. (The original Jessie, Jasmine Guy, left the cast shortly before the opening.) It's a great part—the black star as a living embodiment of various myths and taboos—but it would take a great actress to make the ideas live, to engender sympathy and repulsion simultaneously. Leonard, ever the gentleman, tries to help Miles find her feet by literally kneeling at them. But she's too frightened of what he's offering her: the freedom to act. ♦

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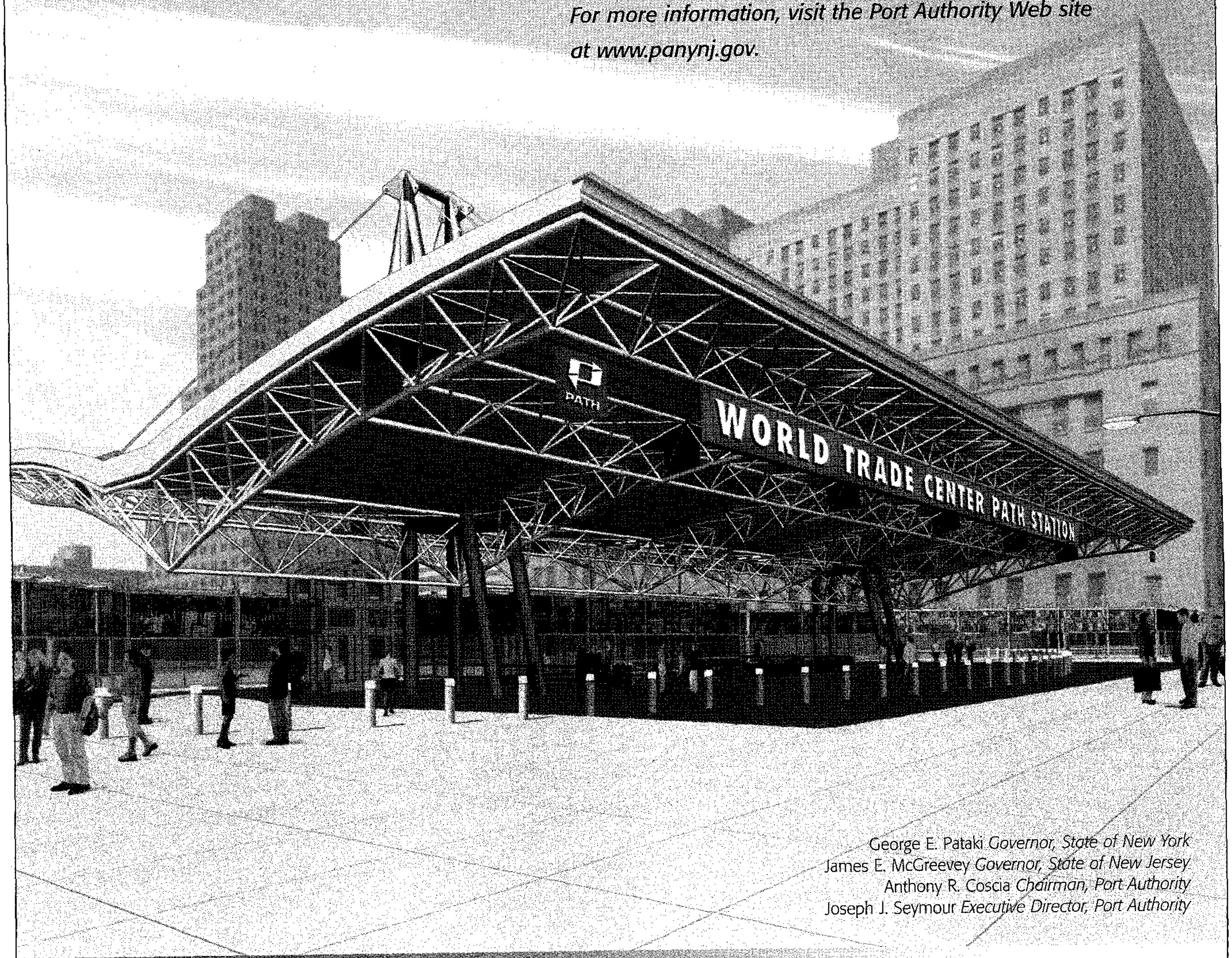

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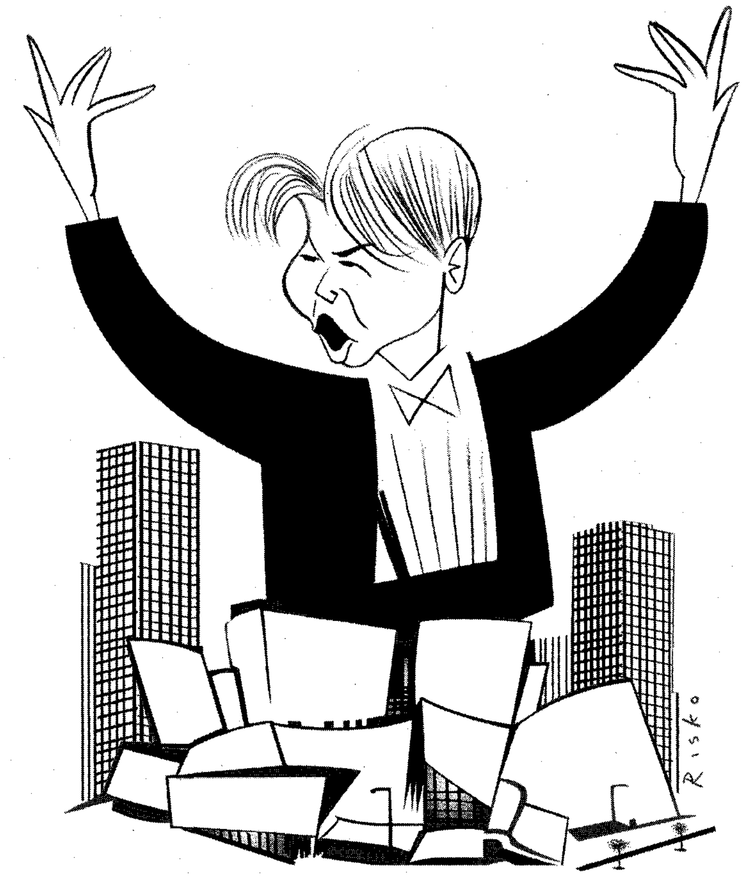
MUSICAL EVENTS

KINGDOM COME

The magic sound of Disney Hall.

BY ALEX ROSS

The old American concert halls were built not just to usher in the right sort of people but to keep the wrong sort out. Upper-crust music lovers believed that they alone had the education and the cultivation to grasp the European masterpieces. The typical hall became a self-conscious cathedral of culture from which vulgar enthusiasms were expunged. The musicians were placed on a raised platform at one end of the room, and a proscenium surrounded them as a heavy frame surrounds a Rembrandt. Time stopped; music became an artifact in a collection. Now, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, orchestras are in the unhappy position of reaping what they sowed. The audience is thinning out, ultimate wealth seeks its validation elsewhere, and nineteenth-century styles of concert presentation have proved unalluring to the young. Orchestras are now trying to undo the work of their forebears and to engage the culture around them, but the halls themselves, Victorian beings, have a way of resisting change.



Esa-Pekka Salonen lacks the preening pomposity of many conductors.

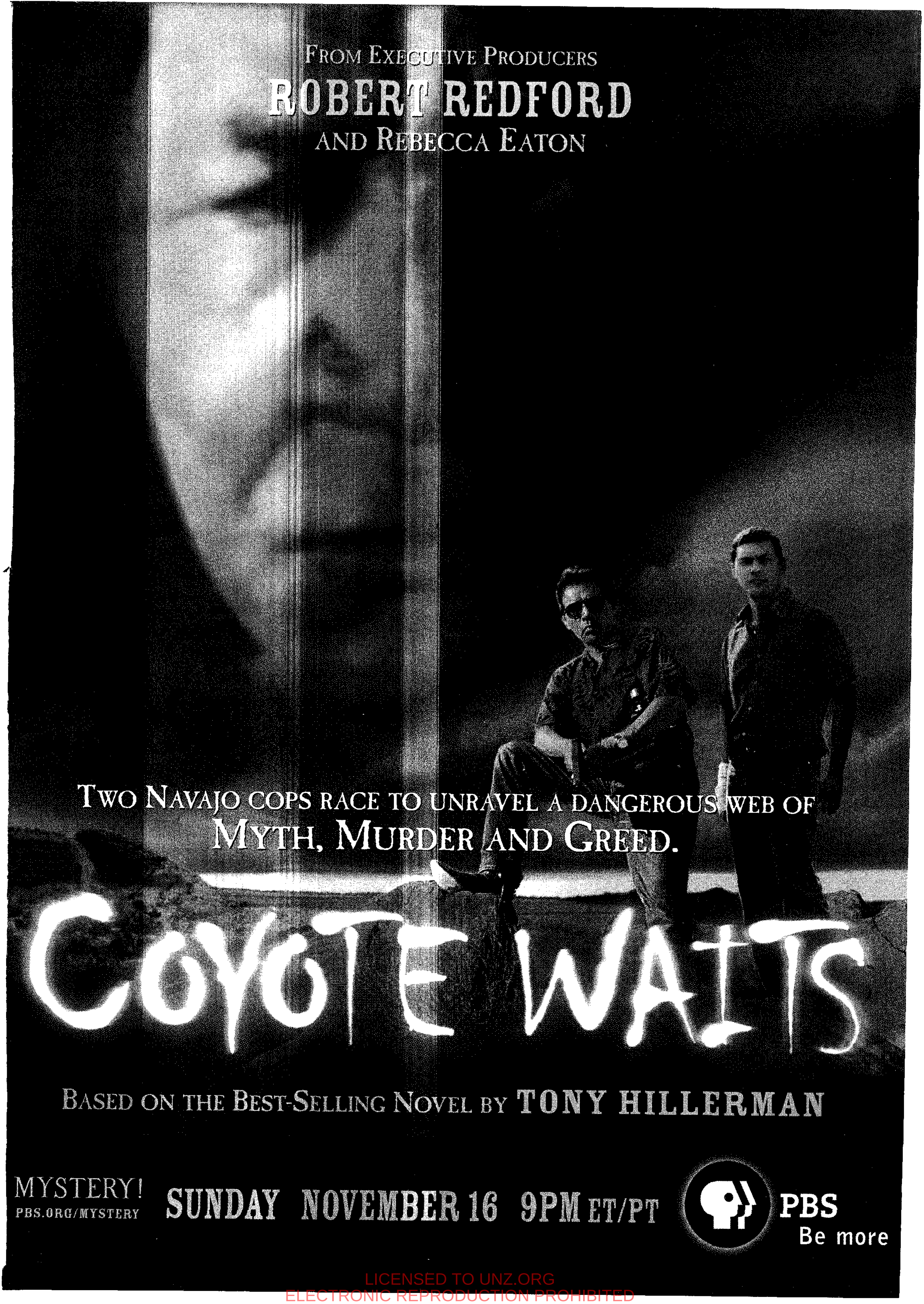
ROBERT RISKO

Walt Disney Concert Hall, the new home of the Los Angeles Philharmonic, is born from an entirely different mentality. The name, to begin with, signifies something other than yesterday's *Social Register* snobbery: Disney, with his Stravinsky music video in "Fantasia," did as much as anyone to bring modern composition to a broad public. Esa-Pekka Salonen, the Philharmonic's music director, is a coolly creative Finn who has partly supplanted the usual Austro-German fare with a lean diet of Stravinsky, Bartók, and Shostakovich. Frank Gehry, the building's architect, is a singular sort of pop avant-gardist, whose parabolic forms are instantly fixed in the public mind. Ernest Fleischmann, the Philharmonic's former managing director and abiding éminence grise, has long plotted to abandon the old paradigm of the Beethoven-centered, status-obsessed orchestra; it was mostly under his influence that Lillian Disney, Walt's widow, came up with the fifty million dollars that got the hall under way. Put all these aspirations together and you have a potent new articulation of classical music's place in popular culture. Disney Hall wants to occupy not the high periphery of American life but the center.

Gehry's building is enjoying a mammoth wave of publicity, the like of which has not been seen in classical parts since Lenny partied with the Panthers on Park Avenue. My first reaction was of slightly disappointed déjà vu; if more of these silver-winged creations touch down in cities around the world, they will begin to resemble quarter-of-a-billion-dollar Hard Rock Cafés. But the exterior is only the beginning of the wonder of the place. Disney is not simply a piece of prize-worthy architecture; it is also a sensational place to hear music and an enchanting place to spend an evening. In richness of sound, it has few rivals on the international scene, and in terms of visual drama it may have no rival at all. Wherever you sit in the hall, from the front center rows to the high back balcony, the gracefully curving, Spanish-galleon lines of the interior arrange themselves in hypnotic perspectives, and the music seizes you from all sides. The painting-on-a-wall illusion shatters; the orchestra throngs the air.

Only a few thousand people have actually heard music in Disney, but Los Angeles has already taken the hall to heart. It was surprising to find such a vast, cosmopolitan city exhibiting such unanimous civic pride; it was as if a small town's high-school football team had won the state championship. I walked into a Coffee Bean store downtown and heard a bunch of weathered union guys grousing over something that the Los Angeles *Times* had reported that morning—namely, that President Bush had failed to send a pro-forma greeting to the opening. Later, a friend and I went to the brutally hip Standard hotel for dinner, and when the valet-parking dudes saw our program books they peppered us with questions. "How did it sound?" they asked. "Did they play more Stravinsky? Did Esa-Pekka write something?"

These are the people that the L.A. Philharmonic wants to pull in, but few



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of them were at the opening galas. Instead, the hall was filled with remnants of old-money L.A. together with Hollywood élite from Michael Eisner down. All the glitter might have distracted even the most puritanical critical mind. I, for one, found it hard to concentrate on the semi-aleatory music of Witold Lutoslawski while looking over the shoulders of Dennis Hopper. The mounting dissonance had me thinking that the actor was about to hatch one of his evil-genius action-movie schemes. Another night, during a performance of Ligeti's "Lux Aeterna," I became fixated on the putatively tragic figure of Gray Davis, California's deposed governor. He seemed riveted by Ligeti's ghostly cantus firmus; his head was cocked to one side, his gaze fixed on the undulant ceiling. He seemed to be undergoing a profound spiritual experience—at least, until he glanced at his watch. I looked for governor-elect Arnold Schwarzenegger, but he did not attend. Was he protesting the Philharmonic's neglect of Austrian modernist composers, such as Beat Furrer and Roman Haubenstock-Ramati?

Salonen might easily have flattered his glamorous audience by loading up the gala programs with bonbons and warhorses. Instead, he chose to stage a comprehensive festival of twentieth- and twenty-first-century composition, with Bach, Gabrieli, and Mozart scattered here and there for novelty. The first program included "Lux Aeterna," Ives's "The Unanswered Question," and "The Rite of Spring." The second had Salonen's "L.A. Variations," Lutoslawski's Cello Concerto (with an inspired Yo-Yo Ma), Silvestre Revueltas's "Sensemayá," and a John Adams première, "The Dharma at Big Sur." The third gala surveyed Hollywood film scores, from Max Steiner's "King Kong" to John Williams's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." Williams shared conducting duties with Salonen and introduced his own new concert piece, "Soundings." Audra McDonald, Josh Groban, and Brian Stokes Mitchell sang movie songs, the standout being David Raksin's voluptuously moody "Laura." Even on this night, Salonen set himself challenges. He conducted Bernard Herrmann's neo-Wagnerian music for "Vertigo" as if it were a freestanding masterpiece, which, in fact, it is.

It bodes well for Salonen's modernizing project that the second gala, the "difficult" one, attracted the most public interest. Salonen has been in Los Angeles for eleven years, and his combination of exacting musicianship and self-effacing charm has won him the trust of his audience. He has the freedom to do more or less whatever he wants, and he exercises that power without the preening pomposity that places so many star conductors on the hazy boundary between genius and fool. It makes no sense to call him "Maestro," and he'd probably laugh if you did.

The first major test of Yasuhisa Toyota's acoustical design came, appropriately, with "The Rite of Spring." From the first notes of the bassoon, it was evident that the hall revealed everything. Solo voices in the orchestra rose up effortlessly and filled the entire space; each had body and color. When all instruments sounded at full volume, you experienced a composition out of Orson Welles: the big picture was clear, yet every detail was distinct. The hyperrhythmic climax of the "Procession of the Sage," with its layering of two over three over four over six over eight over twelve, was a glorious overload of information, a CAT scan of Stravinsky's brain. But the realism came at a price. Any imbalance in the orchestra immediately registered. The Philharmonic has a heavyweight brass section, while its strings favor a lean, tensile approach. The brass sometimes overwhelmed the strings and gave the ensemble a rasping edge. There were moments when the brightness of the sound became almost painful.

A similar problem cropped up during the première of "The Dharma at Big Sur." Adams wrote the piece partly in tribute to the late Lou Harrison, who long preached the virtues of what is called "just intonation"—a system of tuning that retains the perfect integer ratios first measured by Pythagoras. In "Dharma," Adams savored the eerie purity of Harrison's tunings, slowing down harmonic movement to focus on shimmering major chords and shining octaves. An amplified violin, played by Tracy Silverman, wove an endless freewheeling melody that at times resembled a Jimi Hendrix solo. In the second half, "Sri Moonshine," Adams honored another California master, the

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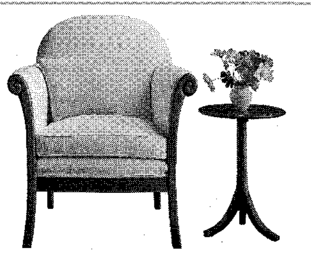

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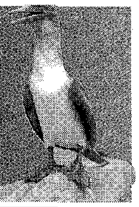

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minimalist pioneer Terry Riley. Strand upon strand of sound accumulated into a gleefully chaotic mass, a pandemonium of joy. The trouble was that the amplification created such a buzz of echoes that the magic harmonies of the orchestra were sometimes completely blotted out.

John Williams, too, used a fusion of instruments and electronics, and in his case the orchestra worked out the balances. "Soundings" lacked the overarching logic of Adams's piece, but it showed off the hallucinatory vividness of the hall's acoustics. The high point was the entry of a very low, very loud electronic D. Williams, in an explanatory essay, said that this note represented the voice of the hall itself, responding to the orchestra's invasion of its previously silent spaces. The composer must have been recalling the wonderful moment in his "Close Encounters" score when the alien spaceship responds in thunderous bass tones to a five-note musical greeting. If intended, the allusion was apt: Disney Hall as a vessel from another world, landing at the corner of First and Grand.

The gala noise of the opening weekend left me with the suspicion that Disney's acoustics, for all their brilliance, lacked warmth and soul. I happily junked that theory after hearing the Academy of St. Martin-in-the-Fields play a program of diehard classics—Bach's Fifth Brandenburg, Mozart's "Jupiter" Symphony, Beethoven's First Piano Concerto—with Murray Perahia conducting from the piano. The ubiquitous Academy has given a lot of bland performances over the years, but in Disney it produced a sound of dreamlike fullness, giving the Beethoven one of those performances that make you say, "Right, *that's* how the music goes." Perahia was able to summon up all his usual refinement without ever straining to be heard. Evidently, Disney Hall will be a paradise not only for orchestras but for recitalists, chamber ensembles, and singers. In this respect, it may have an edge on Carnegie Hall, where small groups often get lost in the beautiful haze. What's more, the sound remains intimate even in the highest balcony, as I discovered when I switched places at intermission. C 161, a thirty-dollar seat all the way in the back on the left, might actually have the best sound and the best view in the house.

The L.A. Philharmonic is a pumped-up virtuoso orchestra of a classic American kind, and it may be working too hard to shake the rafters. When it played in the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, it had to project, throw its voice, to compensate for the dull acoustics. Disney, by contrast, rewards subtlety, understatement, unforced musicality. The hall is an incredibly sensitive beast that registers the slightest noise from performers and listeners alike. A dropped program book clatters like percussion, a slammed door booms like a bass drum. (Something needs to be done about the slamming doors.) Even a slight change in the layout of the orchestra is liable to make a difference in the sound. I wondered whether the perpetually pealing trumpets were positioned too high up on risers and too close to the wall. The risers make for a handsome picture, but the orchestra might achieve better balance if it were flat on the floor.

Then again, Salonen and his orchestra may know exactly what they're doing with their aesthetic of raw power. A lot of people will be coming not to hear the music but to see Gehry's design; the musicians have to reclaim center stage, make people forget that the hall is even there. One man told the Associated Press that he'd waited in line five hours to buy a ticket for Mahler's Second Symphony but expected to take a nap once the music started. I wonder how much sleep he really got during Salonen's wake-the-dead performance. Mahler himself once said, "If we want thousands to hear us in the huge auditoriums of our concert halls and opera houses, we simply have to make a lot of noise." Inaugurating Disney, the L.A. Philharmonic proved beyond a doubt that an orchestra playing at full force remains the biggest sound on earth. ♦

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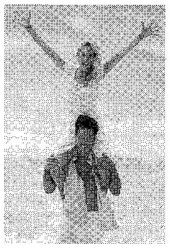

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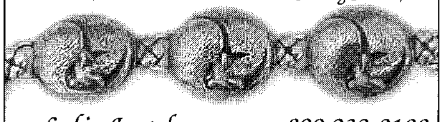

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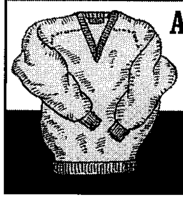

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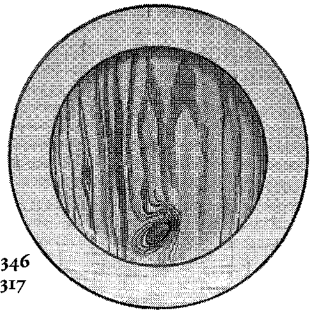
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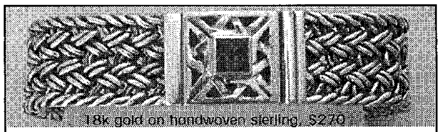
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THE SKY LINE

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

A behemoth rises up in Columbus Circle.

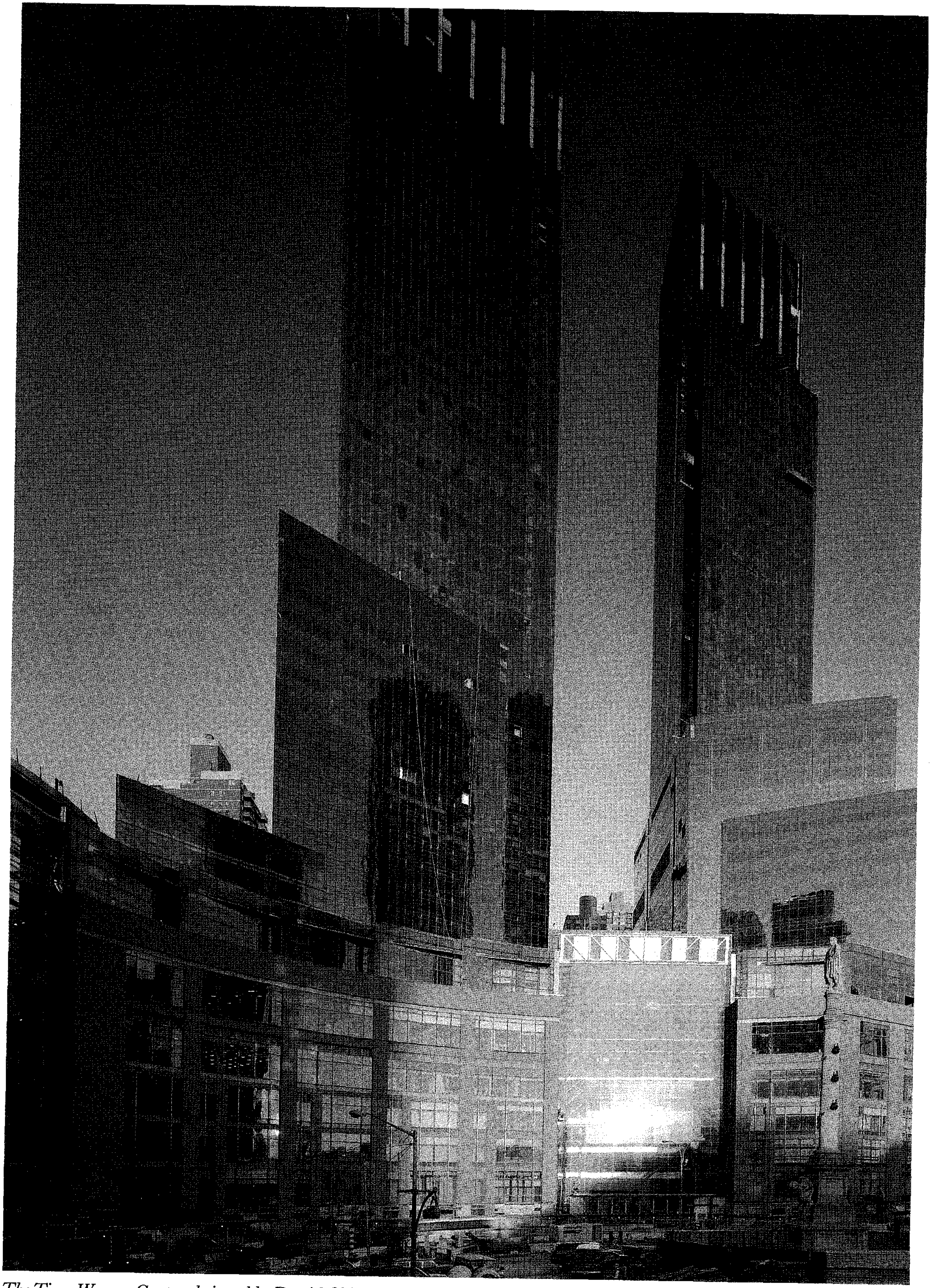
BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

The new Time Warner Center, at the southwest corner of Central Park, isn't a bad piece of urban design. The base of the building reflects the curve of Columbus Circle in a sumptuous, even graceful arc, and it gives the circle a monumentality that it never had before. If you don't look up, you could like this building. Columbus Circle is one of New York's few true roundabouts, and almost every building put on it has ignored the architectural potential that the shape holds. Edward Durell Stone's sweet but hapless marble museum at 2 Columbus Circle made a gentle nod to the curving street, but you hardly noticed it when the monolithic New York Coliseum loomed on the site that the Time Warner Center now occupies. The tall glass stick that is the Trump International Hotel doesn't help much, either.

It may be going overboard to say that the curved base of the Time Warner Center is reminiscent of John Nash's glorious façades on Regent Street in London. A better comparison, perhaps, would be to a fine New York building that is often overlooked—the old Standard Oil headquarters at 26 Broadway in lower Manhattan, by Carrère & Hastings, which has a tower set atop a convex base. The façade of the base reflects the shape of Broadway as it passes Bowling Green. The tower is aligned with the straighter grid of streets to the north, and thus can be seen from a distance. For the Time Warner Center, David Childs of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (who is more famous at the moment for being at loggerheads with Daniel Libeskind over the shape of the Freedom Tower at the World Trade Center site) designed two huge glass towers that are positioned to be seen not just from Central Park but from along the axis of Fifty-ninth Street and Central Park South. The building hunkers over Fifty-ninth Street and blocks it, but the towers have been placed on either side of the atrium, where the street would be, so that as you view the building from afar the open space of the street appears to continue. Childs added a striking sculptural fillip at the southern end of the base, which has a transparent glass skin under which you can see the steel frame.

Alas, the building itself is so big that Childs's well-intentioned gestures mean very little. The best you can say is that they prevent it from being worse than it is, or as bad as earlier versions, which date from the nineteen-eighties. The architecture above the rounded base is dull and conventional. The towers are nicely shaped but banal, and the glass is far too dark. (Strangely, the towers look brighter from across the Hudson River in New Jersey, where the afternoon sun gives their back side a light, glistening tone that the morning sun never seems to confer on the front.) Childs did add some small glass fins that project from the tower façades and provide a bit of texture, but they are not enough to give any real panache or dignity to the place.

The Time Warner Center is a hodgepodge, a sort of Rubik's Cube, with a luxury hotel, offices, condominium apartments, a big retail atrium, restaurants, and space for cultural events all thrown together. It is a theme-park version of a sophisticated urban building, slickly packaged to make city life seem attractive to people who aren't accustomed to it—the sort of thing you would expect to find on North Michigan Avenue in Chicago but not in a city that is as fully defined by its street life as New York is. The condos have spectacular views, but some of the rooms are oddly shaped, which isn't surprising, given that the towers aren't rectangles but parallelograms, designed to



The Time Warner Center, designed by David Childs, is in the last phases of construction. Photograph by Robert Polidori.

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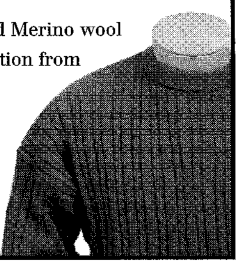

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align the building with the angle of Broadway.

The two-hundred-and-fifty-room Mandarin Oriental hotel was the first tenant to move in, with guests being officially accepted on November 15th. The retail space and the restaurants will open early next year, which is more or less when the two hundred condominium apartments will be finished. They are being marketed now, those in the south tower under the address of One Central Park (which sounds more chic than Columbus Circle), and those in the north tower as the Residences at the Mandarin Oriental. One unit has reportedly been sold to a London financier for forty-five million dollars.

The interiors of the hotel were designed by Brennan Beer Gorman, and six other architects—including the eminent Rafael Viñoly, who designed performance spaces for Jazz at Lincoln Center at the top of the atrium—were involved in various parts of the building. David Childs had to cope with all of them while he wrestled with the problems of making a decent piece of commercial architecture in the middle of New York City. Viñoly seems to have made the most of the building's strong points. The firm of Elkus/Manfredi, which was put in charge of the atrium's retail space, has turned what might have been a stunning, curving arcade into something unpleasantly close to a suburban mall, full of fussy decorative columns. The hotel interiors are conventional—lots of marble and swirling decorations that are intended to distract the eye from the spaces, which are often cramped and awkward.

The Time Warner Center has a long and tortured history. In the early nineteen-eighties, the Koch administration and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority started talking about selling off Robert Moses's wretched old Coliseum, which was owned by the M.T.A. The Coliseum stood on one of the most prominent, and valuable, sites in New York, and city officials must not have thought too much about the fact that the more money a developer paid for the site the bigger the skyscraper he would have to build there, simply to justify the cost. Bigger was thought to be better. And, anyway, city planners of the time were enamored of the idea that new skyscrapers jump-started renewal in otherwise down-at-the-heels neighborhoods.

Thus we got, or almost got, Columbus Center, a pair of hulking towers designed by Moshe Safdie in 1985 for the developer Mortimer Zuckerman, whose firm, Boston Properties, offered the city four hundred and fifty-five million dollars for the Coliseum site, which it planned to turn into the headquarters of Salomon Brothers, an investment-banking firm that exemplified the eighties boom. Safdie's design was widely thought to be grotesque, and it caused an outcry the likes of which New York hadn't seen since Marcel Breuer was commissioned to design a tower to go on top of Grand Central Terminal. The Municipal Art Society argued that the Safdie building would block the light on Central Park, and hundreds of people, including Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, got together to hold black umbrellas along the outlines of what was purported to be the shadow it would cast. Zuckerman fired Safdie and replaced him with David Childs, who redesigned the building as an imitation of Central Park West architecture of the thirties. Childs apparently assumed that if the building seemed familiar enough, people wouldn't mind that it was also enormous, although the protests faded only slightly. The urban theatre provided by the people with the umbrellas was memorable, but, in the long run, a suit brought by the Municipal Art Society against the city was probably more effective. The society claimed that by selling off the site to the highest bidder, and granting zoning concessions, the city was in effect selling zoning rights, which is illegal. The society won, and the project was scaled down. Then, in 1987, the stock market crashed, and Salomon Brothers withdrew. The real-estate market collapsed a couple of years later, which put plans on hold.

The Time Warner Center is Columbus Center by another name. Mort Zuckerman is gone, and David Childs is now working with Stephen Ross of the Related Companies and William Mack of Apollo Real Estate Advisers,

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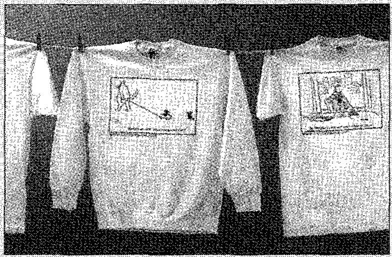

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who won a competition for the project that the Giuliani administration initiated in 1996, early in a new real-estate boom. Ross and Mack paid less for the site than Zuckerman had offered, and the building is a little smaller than the eighties versions, but it's still too big by half. Although Childs moved from Retro Central Park West to Anywhere Corporate Glass Sleek, the basic elements of Columbus Center remain. It's a mixed-use building with two large towers and shopping at the bottom. The most important addition, a nod to the Giuliani administration's demand that the project have a public component, is the performance spaces for Jazz at Lincoln Center. Giuliani had wanted a hall in which opera could be performed, and one of the spaces is outfitted to accommodate elaborate sets, just in case. The jazz spaces will not open until late next year, but even now, in their half-constructed state, they look terrific.

A jazz hall with spectacular city views almost, but not quite, justifies the whole overblown venture. The center originated when the government decided to sell off a piece of public land to private developers. A really big building would pay for a lot of subway cars. But that isn't the way to construct a city. Government should act as a referee in the game of real-estate development, and not as a player. Traditionally, it sets the rules, which is what zoning laws are. Developers are supposed to push for the maximum—after all, making money is their job—and the city is supposed to say no when a project threatens the public interest. But when the city joined forces with the M.T.A. to squeeze as much money as it could out of Columbus Circle the balance between public interests and private interests was endangered. The equilibrium of the development process was thrown out of whack. The city wasn't regulating the feeding frenzy; it was leading it. The people who protested the sellout, who went head to head against the forces with the money, did something important. But the fact that the city pulled in the reins a bit and agreed to take a little less money and have a slightly smaller building didn't change the story much. Money usually wins in this town. ♦

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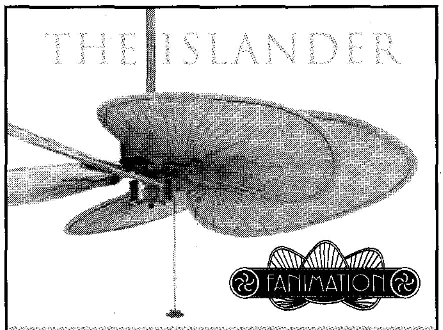

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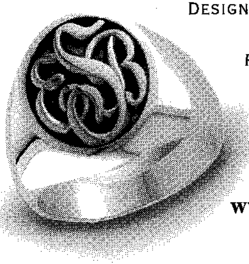

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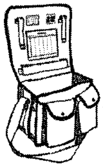

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

RULING THE WAVES

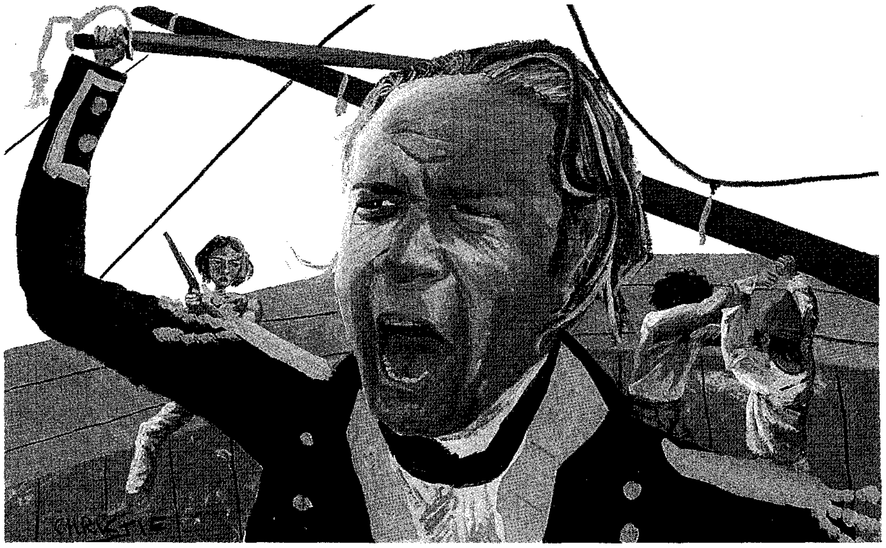
Patrick O'Brian's epic series comes to the screen.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The new Peter Weir film is called "Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World," and what a mouthful it is. There are sailors in this movie who can load and fire a twelve-pounder in less time than some viewers will take to pronounce the title. The reason for the ungainliness is that Weir and his co-writer, John Collee, have packed a brace of novels by the late Patrick O'Brian—titled, yes, "Master and Commander" and "The Far Side of the World"—into a solid lump of narrative, lasting a little more than two hours. Should sequels ensue, the choice of material may prove inexhaustible, for O'Brian left us twenty volumes of his naval saga, of which this movie plunders mainly from the first and the tenth. If the moviegoing public warms to the unpartable pair of friends around whom the series turns—Jack Aubrey, captain of H.M.S. Surprise, and Stephen Maturin, the ship's surgeon—then, rest assured, there are plenty more tales for the telling.

The film begins on the ocean and barely leaves it, as if reluctant to find its land legs. When our heroes do step ashore, it is onto the Galápagos Islands, which are so enticingly unfamiliar—especially to the questing Stephen, who will travel any distance for a new species of iguana—that they count as the antithesis of home. Otherwise, the men are all at sea, with none of the bewilderment that the phrase suggests. The year is 1805, the Royal Navy is in its pomp and prime, and what Jack commands is not so much a vessel as a floating town—a kingdom in miniature, governed with sage severity and equipped not merely with cannons and muskets but with everything from violins to goats. "This ship is England," the Captain enjoins his men as they prepare for conflict, and there is a ringing Shakespearean clarity to his call.

All the weirder, then, to think that the words are spoken by an Australian. For Weir—an Australian himself, who once directed the vigorously anti-British "Gallipoli"—has, in searching for his ideal Jack Aubrey, happened upon Russell Crowe. In political terms, this is like asking Woody Allen to play Joseph McCarthy, but in dramatic terms it makes more brutal sense. I can take or leave the tabloids' oily outrage at Crowe's reported diet of booze and brawls, but I like the leakage of that reputation into his work—the slow drip of aggression which insures that when his characters, having bided their time, finally break into open hostility our belief in them is secure. That was certainly the case with his Maximus, in "Gladiator," and now, in "Master and Commander," the furrowing of Jack's brow adds to the sense, at times unendurable, that something salty is just about to happen.



Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey in Peter Weir's film.

R. GREGORY CHRISTIE

So it is at the start, with the Surprise off the coast of Brazil, easing through the kind of sea that would cause Homer to nudge you in the ribs and whisper, "Wine-dark. Told you so." Through the fog come the French, and battle is shortly joined, with the British ship caught unawares, wounded down to her rudder, and forced to turn tail. After a refit, carried out afloat, the chase is on, and the Surprise must pursue and trap her assailant, the Acheron, which is preying on defenseless whalers and generally being too French. It is with some puzzlement, then, that one flips back to O'Brian's "The Far Side of the World" to discover that Aubrey's perfidious foe was not French but American—a bullish frigate by the name of Norfolk. At which point conspiracy theorists everywhere will splutter into their black coffee, aghast at the thought that Hollywood is doing Washington's bidding and throwing mud at France.

I cannot summon much enthusiasm for this charge. For one thing, so frequently do the French and Spanish feature as Jack's natural targets throughout the twenty volumes that to focus now on his American antagonists—whose quarrel with England was described by Jack himself as "this absurd, unnecessary war"—would be almost perverse. For another thing, O'Brian, not just a formidable researcher but also unrivalled in his breathing of life and fire into archival findings, was amazingly at ease with the sway of artistic license: "It is clear that the writer will soon have originality thrust upon him, for he is running short of history," he says in an author's note. If you are an O'Brian fan—and no sooner do most people embark on the first chapter of the first novel, in which Jack gets his first command, than they feel the rare gust of fanaticism—you will drive yourself nuts trying to note and lament the losses incurred between page and screen, but it will be mostly wasted effort. Better by far to sit back, relax, and enjoy the amputation.

This is performed by Stephen Maturin—a delectable role for any actor, and one that Paul Bettany, previously seen as Russell Crowe's roommate in "A Beautiful Mind," does well not to gorge upon too heavily. Stephen is a physician by trade, a naturalist by instinct, and—though we hear nothing of it in this film—a spy for the British government. "Although he had spent many years at sea Dr. Maturin had not gained the slightest tincture of seamanship," O'Brian writes, and Bettany, squinting through his spectacles, offers a winning blend of the eager and the retiring, content to ride mountainous swells if they will aid him in his unspoken mission to become, in essence, a modern man. Jack is, in the words of the book, "a Tory, a man who liked old ways and old wine," and the movie's hardest task is to reproduce the ceaseless, sparking dynamic of his friendship with Stephen—a rationalist and a deep reader, a Darwinian in the making. Hence the beautiful moment of dovetailing, in the latter half of the picture, when Stephen returns from his Galápagos excursion with a stick insect and explains its camouflage to the Captain. Jack is duly inspired (Crowe, ever the underplayer, does it with a tiny tilt of the head), and a plan is hatched: the Surprise, true to her name, will clad herself as a ragged old whaler and track her victim in disguise.

By this time, the two ships have sailed through such a symphony of weathers that they might as well be journeying between planets. We get a fearsome rounding of the Horn, during which the dialogue is so thoroughly drowned by rain and wind that the characters could, for all I know, be discussing the state of their laundry. Next, and much worse, are the Doldrums, with the men sweating above a sea like mercury—"As idle as a painted ship / Upon a painted ocean." Indeed, it is hard not to reflect upon "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," published seven years before this adventure of Jack's; when his ship is becalmed or lashed with ice, when Stephen runs after an albatross and is almost killed for his pains, when the men take exception to a nervous superior called Hollom (Lee Ingleby) and treat him as a curse—all of this, much of it devised by Weir, seems to reach back through O'Brian as far as Coleridge, and to touch on the poem's compound of wild impetus and stagnating superstition.

That murk survives and thrives onscreen, not least because Weir, unlike Aubrey, permits no women on board. Be advised that "Master and Commander" is a men-only movie, although some of the men are boys. It is a shock to be reminded of the beardless age at which the sons of good families used to be pushed into the service. Early in the film, as if to confirm just how dour a life at sea can be, Midshipman Blakeney (Max Pirkis) loses his shattered right arm to Stephen's saw. Pirkis looks as fair and unknowing as Mark Lester did in "Oliver!," and the scene is salutary to a fault; it signals that we are in for a sombre trip, and the ensuing hours are marked as much by creaking unease as by flurries of derring-do. In fact, there is more derring-don't in "Master and Commander" than one might have expected, and the earlier Weir film that it most resembles is not "The Mosquito Coast," or even "The Year of Living Dangerously," but "The Last Wave," his ominous chiller of 1977. Moreover, some of Crowe's line readings are so low and growly that you must strain to catch them; we have come a long way since the ocean was the province of lithe, laughing hearties such as Burt Lancaster and Errol Flynn, and I for one was relieved when this movie neared its climax, threw off its sullen mood, and allowed Captain Jack to cry, "Quick's the word and sharp's the action." And sharp it is, too, kicked by the recoil of the cannons and the lunge of swords.

Young Blakeney is in the thick of it, assuming command of the Surprise while her master swings aboard another ship. With his remaining arm, the kid has literally become a half-Nelson, agog with the flush of victory, and we see in his exploits, as in those of Stephen and Jack, the thrust of O'Brian's epic. What the novels leave us with, and what emerges more fitfully from this film, as if in shafts of sunlight, is the growing realization that, although our existence is indisputably safer, softer, cleaner, and more dependable than the lives led by Captain Aubrey and his men, theirs were in some immeasurable way *better*—richer in possibility, and more regularly entrancing to the eye and spirit alike. As Stephen says of the Iliad, "The book is full of death, but oh so living." Just so; if you died on board the Surprise, it would not be for want of having lived. ♦

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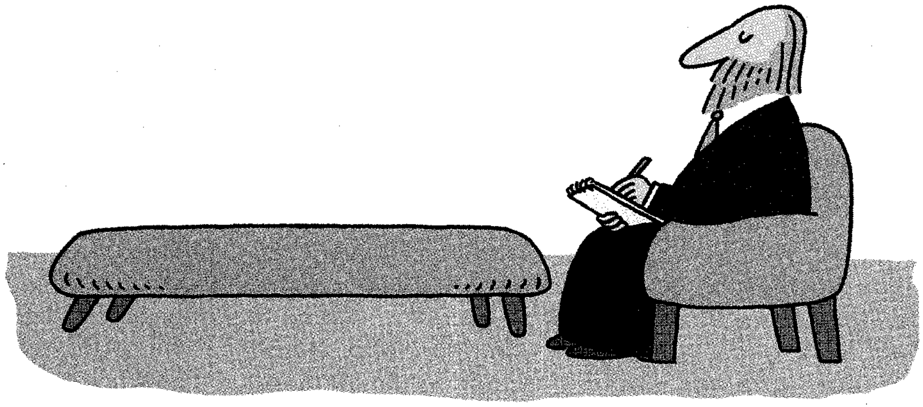
THE BACK PAGE

MAKE YOUR OWN CARTOON

Our Cartoon Caption Contest is now in its fifth year, and we're changing it a bit. Below are all the components necessary for a brand-new Charles Barsotti cartoon. Cut out one or more of the figures, arrange them as you like, write a caption, and mail us your cartoon. We'll pick the best idea and Barsotti will draw it, then we'll publish it (under his name) and present the original to the winner.



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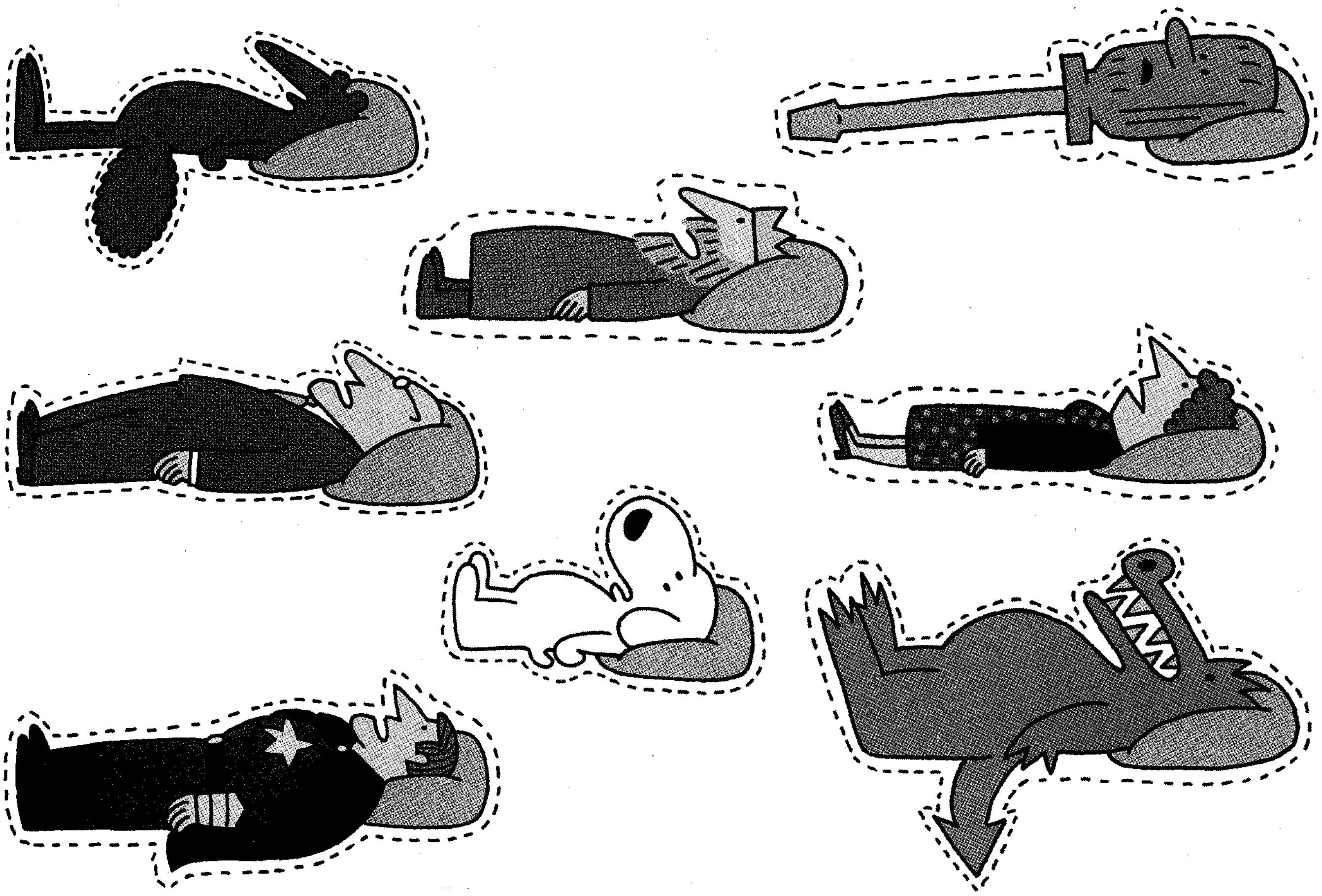

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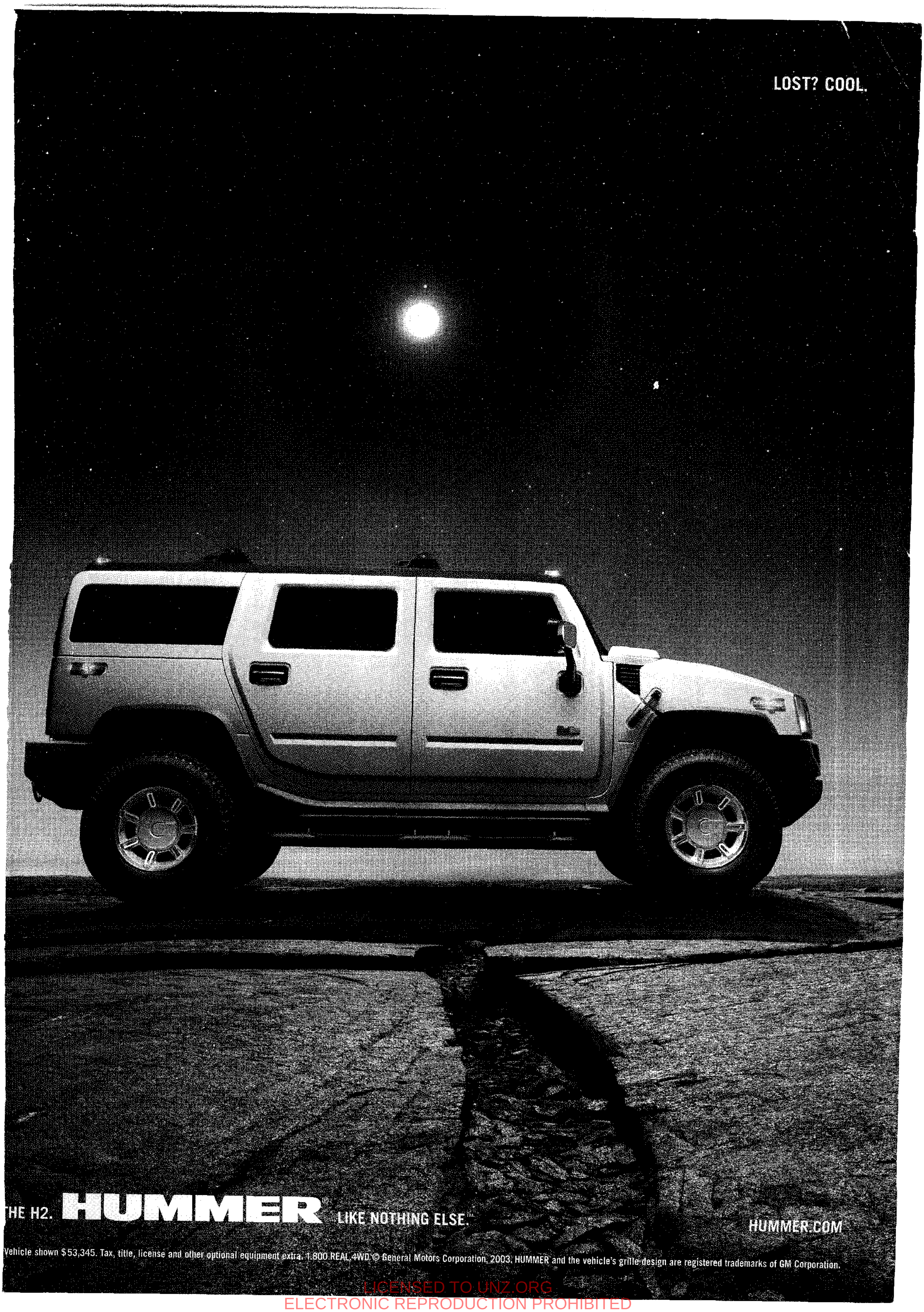
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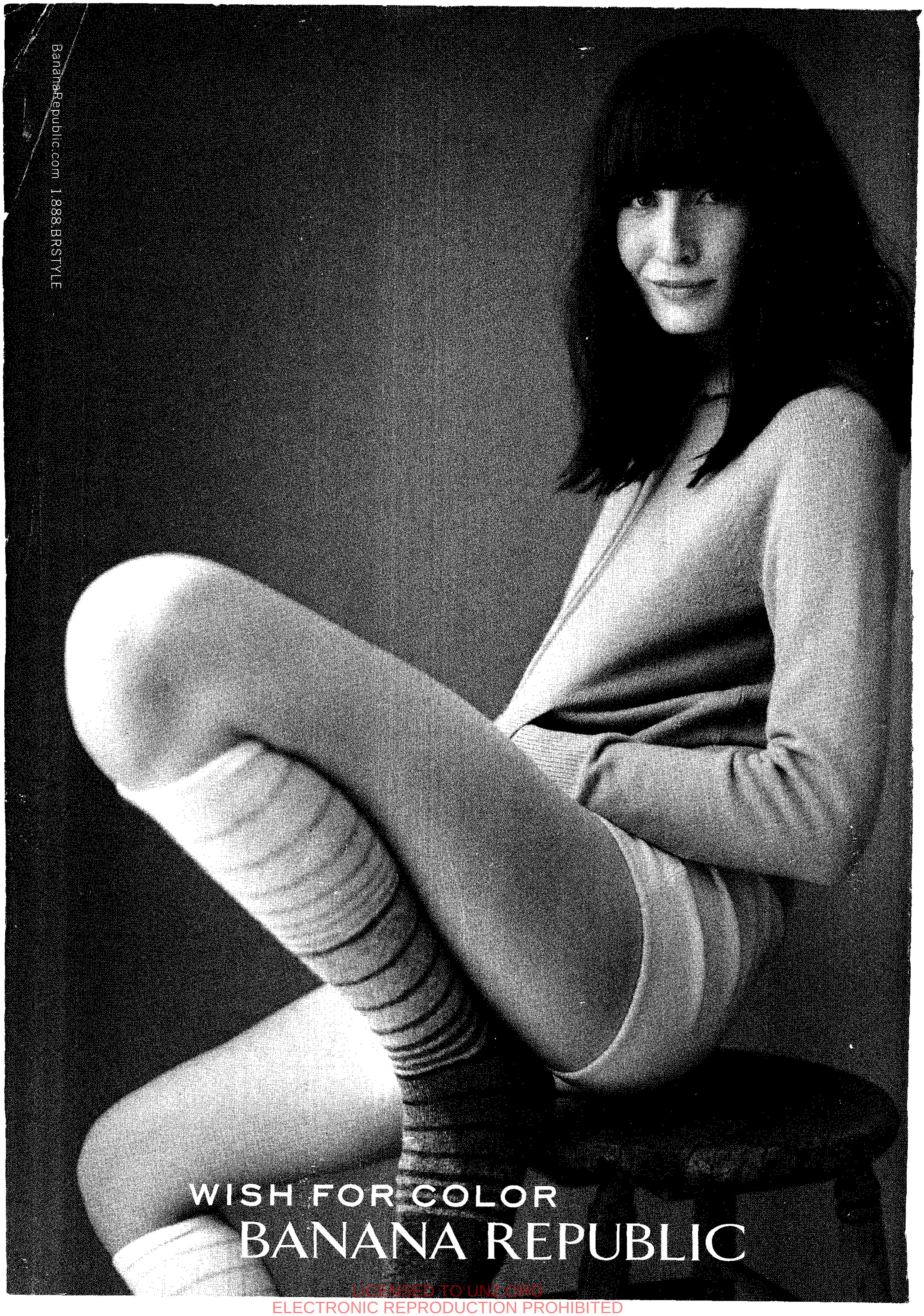
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